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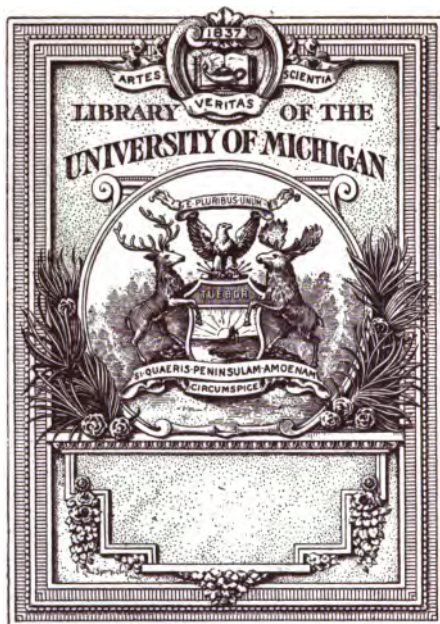
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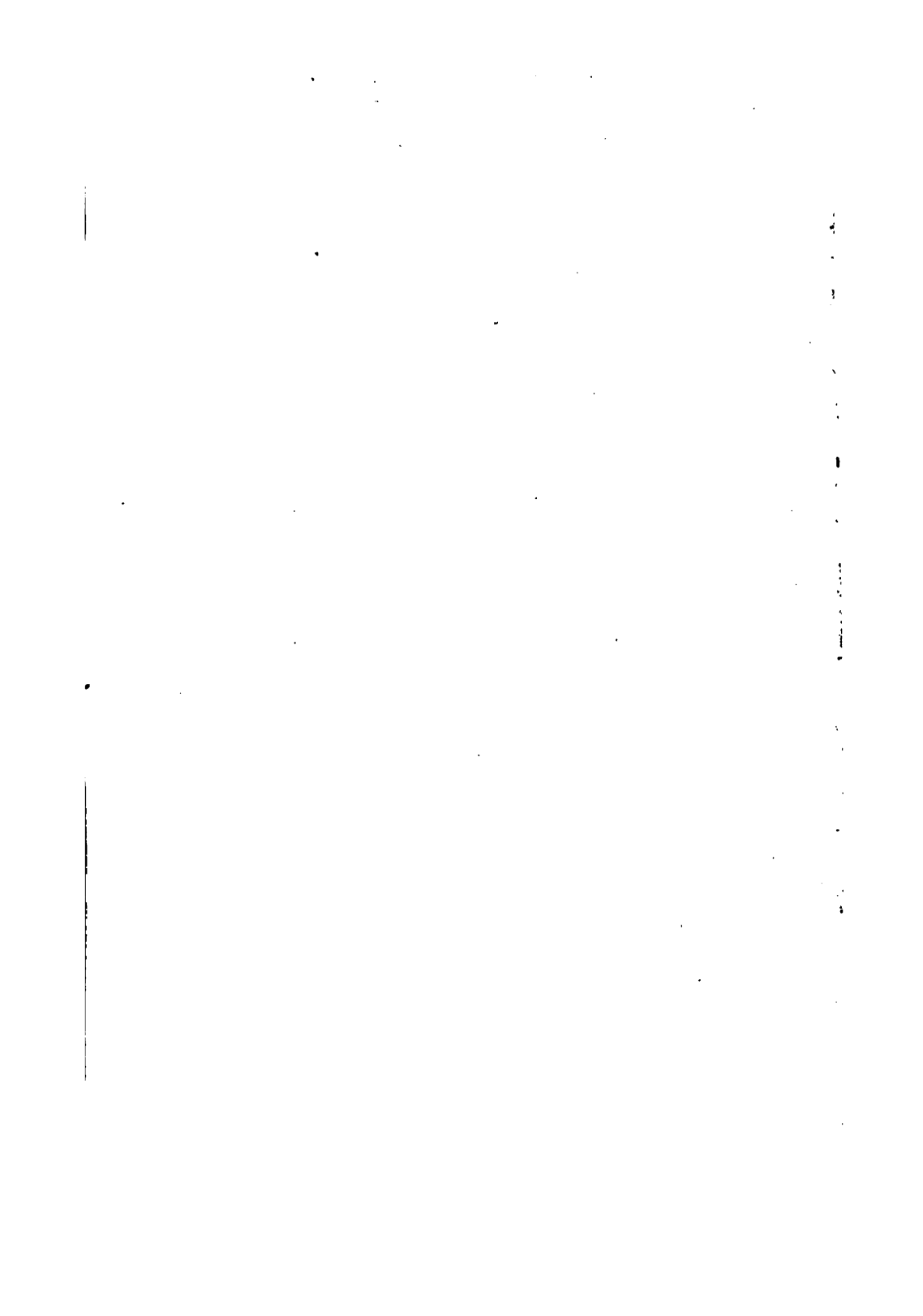
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LETTERS
TO
ELIZABETH HITCHENER.

LETTERS
FROM
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
TO
ELIZABETH HITCHENER.

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED.

With an Introduction and Notes.

——— till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity !

LONDON :
BERTRAM DOBELL,
77, CHARING CROSS ROAD, W.C.

NEW YORK :
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1908.

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"The peculiar virtue of his [Shelley's] epistles is to express the mind of the poet as perfectly as Macaulay's express the mind of the man of letters, or Wellington's the mind of the general; . . . and a very great part of the pleasure to be derived from them is the observation of their intimate correspondence with the deliberate poetical achievement upon which they are an undesigned commentary. They prove that Shelley's ideal world was a real world to Shelley himself; and contain nothing to suggest that the man habitually lived on a lower level than the author."

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INTRODUCTION.

NOR the least of the gratifications which I have had in introducing new or unknown works to the reader is that which I now feel in publishing for the first time a complete edition of Shelley's Letters to Miss Hitchener. To do some service to the memory of the great poet and the most single-minded of men has long been my desire ; and now that it has been placed within my power to do this, my delight is only dashed by the feeling of my own inability to deal worthily and adequately with my theme. I could have wished indeed that a longer time had been granted to me in which to accomplish my task : as it is, it was necessary

either to do it rapidly or to leave it undone ; and so it must needs be done imperfectly.

Some day I believe that a great tragic writer will take in hand the dramatisation of the life of Shelley. When this is done, the matter of the first two acts, I think, will be derived from the events of his early life up to his marriage with Harriet Westbrook ; the third and fourth acts will deal with his separation from her, her death, and his marriage to his second wife ; while the fifth act will tell the story of his life in Italy up to the final catastrophe. So, at any rate, the poet's life seems to me to unfold itself, if looked upon as having been—as most assuredly it was—a great tragic poem. In the present volume we have the preparatory and early scenes of the drama, which the chief actor must have regarded, in spite of some intervals of hope and exaltation, as almost wholly a failure ; for I do not

think he ever felt the assurance which Shakespeare so proudly expressed as to the eternity of his fame. We view in these letters distinctly, and not as through a glass darkly, what Shelley was in his youth; and see how his nature, acting upon the circumstances around him, and being in turn acted upon by them, was moulding itself into that fine flower of the human spirit which we can now see in all its incomparable beauty. Anyone of ordinary penetration, to whom this correspondence might at the time have been communicated, could not have failed to divine therefrom that the writer was doomed to a stormy career for himself, and to cause perplexity and unhappiness to most of those with whom his fortunes might chance to be interlinked. It may be said that it is easy to prophesy after the event; but surely it needed no conjuror in this case to come to the

conclusion I have indicated. What, however, could not have been safely prophesied, or indeed foreseen at all, at the period covered by these letters, is that which has alone given them and all Shelley's writings previous to the year 1813, value and importance; namely the fact that their author was to become, if not the greatest poet of the last century, at least one of the three or four supreme singers of his time. Looking back upon them with the knowledge of what was to follow we may indeed say that such a plentiful crop of weeds at least attested the fertility of the soil, and gave hope that with proper cultivation flowers and fruits would spring up with equal luxuriance. But so rare are the instances in which so bad a beginning has led up to a final triumph that anyone who had prophesied this in Shelley's case would have been rash indeed. There is no greater marvel in literature,

abounding as it does in marvels, than the fact that the author of "Zastrozzi" and "St. Irvyne" was to develop into the writer of "The Cenci" and "Prometheus Unbound." Yes! even if Shakespeare really wrote "Titus Andronicus," it is not so extraordinary that he should also have written "Othello" and "King Lear," as is the fact I have just mentioned. Had Shelley lived ten years longer nothing would have galled him more—perhaps indeed even in the last few years of his life it galled him much—than the thought that he could not destroy the evidences of his youthful inexperience and folly. Yet it was really fortunate that no misgivings prevented him in his youth from writing and publishing those formless abortions which we can now only regard with mingled astonishment and amusement. The art of thinking must be acquired (how few ever do acquire it!) before it becomes

possible to think to any purpose : the use of words must be learnt before they can be employed effectively : he who desires to create a work of art must, like the hero of Mrs. Shelley's story, not even shrink from the risk of creating a monster. To say that the best way to write well is to write badly is only a seeming paradox, not a real one. Therefore, though it remains and must ever remain unaccountable to us how the young Shelley could pass from the juvenilities of 1810 and 1811 to the masterpieces of his later years, it is certain that his early failures were the indispensable preludes to his final successes, and even contained within them the germs from which his triumphs were to spring.

Professor Dowden in his "Life of Shelley" has made some use of these letters, and has given a very clear and good account of Shelley's relations with Miss Hitchener. Mr. D. F.

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MacCarthy in his "Early Life of Shelley" has also much to say about the Hitcheners correspondence. Nevertheless it seems necessary (since those works are not within everyone's reach) to give here at least a summary account of the circumstances under which the letters came to be written. I can add little to the accounts which the two writers named above have given; and therefore the reader will understand that as regards the facts of the case I am much indebted to them; though for all opinions expressed, or deductions drawn from the evidence, I wish to be held solely responsible.

The story of the Hitcheners entanglement—for that is what it really was—is a strange one—as strange perhaps as any of the events in a life which was made up of marvels; though it was not, as it happened, so tragic in its sequel as others were. Shelley alone, and no one else of whom we have any record,

could have been the hero of such a romance. It was an episode in his search for that ideal being, compounded of beauty, wisdom, and virtue, not cold and bloodless, but glowing with desire to promote the welfare of humanity, which his imagination had created, and which of course was not to be found in any mortal form. But Shelley's mistake, after all, was not an uncommon one. Most men idealise the women they love ; or there would be a remarkable falling-off in the number of marriages. After a period of disillusionment, however, the average man learns, with more or less grace, to reconcile himself to the want of ideal qualities in his partner. And until the ideal man appears—and Shelley himself, we must confess, fell short of the ideal standard of humanity—the best companion for the average man will be, not the ideal woman, but woman as she is, with all her faults and imperfections. Whether

Shelley ever realised this fact I do not know; but he was growing so fast in wisdom and knowledge of mankind at the time of his death that he would certainly have discovered it, as well as many other truths of human nature which were yet obscure to him, had he lived a few years longer. Imagination is an excellent servant but a bad master. In his youth—and he had hardly outgrown his youth at the time of his death—Shelley's imagination was certainly his master rather than his servant: it made him a poet, but it also made his career a life-long tragedy.

Shelley's acquaintance with Miss Hitchener began in 1811, while he was staying at Cuckfield with his uncle, Captain Pilfold. She was a schoolmistress at the neighbouring town of Hurstpierpoint; and a daughter of Captain Pilfold was one of her pupils. Her father, it appears, after having

been a smuggler, had become the keeper of a public-house. Miss Hitchener's parents were not qualified to train her in mental discipline ; but she owed much to her schoolmistress, Miss (or Mrs) Adams, whom she termed "the mother of her soul." When she first met Shelley she was in her twenty-ninth year, though she looked younger. She was very thin, and somewhat tall in figure, with strong and well-formed features. She was dark in complexion, had lustrous black eyes, and an abundance of black hair. Altogether she was a somewhat attractive-looking woman, and her mental qualities were certainly a good deal above those of the average woman of her time. Her opinions were liberal, both on politics and religion ; but, like most of her sex she did not care to set herself in open opposition to the received opinions of the world. She was, in short, a woman, and not even a woman with masculine

qualities ; but yet a woman of more than ordinary ability, and with a nature which responded eagerly to the advances of one who, in spite of the difference in station between them, was willing to treat her, not as her neighbours did, as a visionary or eccentric creature, but as a kindred spirit, anxious like himself to promote the general welfare of humanity, and the progress of enlightenment. She could not but be flattered at the thought that the well-born young man, who, whatever men might think of him, almost invariably gained the good-will and respect, if not the affection, of the women with whom he became acquainted, was willing so far to defer to her opinions as to give them at least an attentive hearing. So began one of the most singular correspondences that ever passed between man and woman. As that correspondence (complete, as far as it exists) is in the reader's hands it will not now be

necessary for me to do more than to make some observations upon points which seem to require elucidation ; or on which (to speak quite candidly) I desire to express some opinions of my own, perhaps of no great value, and not too much to the purpose.

At the beginning of this correspondence, Shelley had not yet reached his nineteenth birthday. He was therefore little more than a boy ; as regards knowledge of the world indeed, no more than a boy. That kind of knowledge he was always slow to acquire. Nothing indeed could ever teach it to him but the bitterest experience and the most cruel disenchantments. In the first of these letters we find him protesting that henceforth reason alone shall be his guiding star through life. How little did he know himself when he made that avowal ! Did he, in fact, ever in his life see things in the clear light of reason ? Or rather, since that

is a light in which no one ever sees them, did he ever see them in the light in which they appear to the average sensual (or sensible) human being? Only on Bishop Berkeley's theory, that mind creates what it sees and that the things seen have no independent existence, can it be said that Shelley ever saw clearly anything in the world outside his own consciousness. He no more saw the world as it is seen by ordinary humanity than Traherne or William Blake did. Every object that presented itself to his senses assumed characteristics not belonging to itself, but to the mirror which in receiving it, transmuted it, it might be into something more precious, but certainly into something different from what it really was. Like Turner in his later paintings, he saw all nature arrayed in hues of the most iridescent splendour, or in the most fantastic combinations of colours. The moon as we behold it

shining serenely in the sky does not differ more from the barren and desolate wilderness which astronomers tell us it really is than Shelley's world differed from the world of reality. Until this fact is thoroughly grasped, a true and sympathetic judgment of Shelley's character—and only a sympathetic judgment can be a true one—is impossible.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about these letters is the fact that it is hard to look upon them as veritable epistles which were indeed sent through the post to a real and not an imaginary recipient. Did we not know that there can be no question as to their genuineness, we should be tempted to believe them to be the invention of some novelist—and rather a female than a male novelist—who wrote them with an eye to their publication by the Minerva Press. In the early part of the last century novels which were written in the

form of letters were very common, and seem to have been very popular. It is really wonderful how great is the likeness between works of this class and the contents of the present volume. "But you have formed in your mind the Deity of Virtue." "My dear friend Hogg, that noble being, is with me, and will be always, but my wife will abstract from our intercourse the shadow of impropriety." "But with the sister of my soul I have no obligations: to her I feel no gratitude: I stand not on etiquette, alias insincerity." "With, I hope, eternal love." "I hesitate not a moment to write to you: rare though it be in this existence, communion with you can unite mental benefit with *pure* gratification." Passages like these, and a hundred others which might be quoted, were the commonplaces of the romancists of the period, and were, I suppose, taken by the readers of the time as the proper

language of friendship and affection. Strange contradiction ! if we look at the caricatures of Gillray, Rowlandson, and their contemporaries, we must conclude (unless we are resolved to think that their drawings had little or no relation to the real life of the period) that a generation more gross in appearance, more vicious in morals, and more selfishly intent upon mere sensual gratification, never existed than that of the early years of the nineteenth century : while if we take the popular novels of the time as our criterion, we must believe that men and women alike were then creatures of the most refined sensibilities, the most exquisite delicacy of thought and the noblest impulses.¹ That Shelley

¹ Of course I intend to say no more than that this was the case as far as words and professions went : as a matter of fact, the actions and conduct of these creatures of sentiment were often anything but consistent with their noble utterances.

had been a great reader of novels of this sort we are well aware ; and that his head was full of crude ideas as to the problems of life and the relations between the sexes, derived, partly at least, from them, is also certain. Though we have indeed our own schools of foolish or foul fiction, these romances of false sentiment and impossible incidents seem to us now to bear so little relation to sense or nature, that it is hard to realise that they were once admired, and had even a considerable influence over the minds of their readers. Every now and then we have an outcry against the so-called "penny dreadfuls," or romances of blood, piracy, and highway robbery ; but it is doubtful if these things have ever done half so much mischief as was done in their time by these effusions—yes ! 'effusions' is exactly the right word here—of overbubbling sentimentality and affected emotion. It is no wonder that the mind of Shelley,

quite uncritical as yet, full of visionary notions, and devoid of that sense of the humorous which is the great safeguard against the formation of false views of life, failed to perceive the hollowness and artificiality of these productions. I cannot doubt that they exercised a considerable influence over his feelings and his conduct. Do I wrong him in thinking that all through the present correspondence I see him congratulating himself on the fact that he was playing a part in a series of romantic events such as might well form the material for a thrilling story ? He may not have been conscious of this feeling ; but I believe it was there nevertheless. He was avid of ideas and sensations ; and even if they were painful ones, he preferred them to the mere vacuity of mind which was common enough then, as it is now in ordinary humanity. One might say indeed that he was always going out of his way to find or create

difficulties for himself in order that he might derive from them some new sensation, or become the Prometheus of a new rebellion against the ancient gods.

All this while we are treating the lady in the case somewhat ungallantly. Let us return to her, and ask how the correspondence is to be regarded from her point of view. Upon the whole she was, I think, a lucky woman. She came into contact with Shelley at his most impressionable period, and remained for more than twelve months the goddess of his idolatry. It is true that it was not to a not much more than ordinarily-endowed schoolmistress, but to a creature almost wholly created by his own imagination, that Shelley was devoted ; but that was a fact which she would have been more than a woman if she had perceived. To have been for such a length of time the recipient of the poet's most intimate confidences, and to have had the pleasure of pouring

out to him in return on the most generous scale her own effusions of heart and brain, must have been almost as great a pleasure as life could give her. There was one drop indeed of bitterness in the cup of delight. She would hardly have been a woman had she not sometimes felt a sharp pang of disappointment when she reflected that much as Shelley admired her mental qualities, it was without any thought of her as an object of sexual affection. Few women desire to be admired for their intellect or talent, if that admiration is not conjoined with some regard for their persons ; and I feel sure that Miss Hitchener would have been content if Shelley had rated her mental qualities much less highly, provided she could have flattered herself that love had at least a little share in attracting him towards her. But apart from this the correspondence must have been an unmingled pleasure to her ; and such it

would doubtless have remained had she not in an evil hour yielded to Shelley's oft repeated invitations that she should domesticate herself with him and his newly-married wife. Could she have resisted this temptation she would have been able all her life to cherish the thought that she, above all women, had been the poet's most intimate friend and confidante, and had even been in some degree his teacher and inspirer. It is true that Shelley must have at last discovered, as he discovered in so many other cases, that the idol of his imagination was but a woman and not a very wise one; but this need not have involved any other consequence than a gradual dropping of the correspondence, for which the lady might have found a hundred good reasons without suspecting the true one.

Not even if Miss Hitchener had possessed all the virtues and all the wisdom with which Shelley's imagina-

tion had endowed her, could the experiment of becoming a member of his household have proved a success. It was strange indeed that the lady, who was ten years older than Shelley, and who was therefore not without experience of the world, and knowledge of the characteristics of her sex, did not perceive how impossible it was that such an arrangement could last. A little thought would have shown her how utterly unlikely it was that she could hold her ground against the wife and the sister-in-law, both of whom would inevitably regard her as an intruder, and who would be all the more bitterly opposed to her the more she was valued by Shelley. It was, it must be confessed, a trial too great for feminine human nature, and one which no one but Shelley would have expected it to endure. We may be sure that immediately on Miss Hitchener's arrival the contest between

the three women, which could have only one issue, was begun. Nor will anyone who has the least acquaintance with the character of the sex be at any loss to imagine in what way the campaign against the intruder was conducted. Women have a far keener eye to detect the weaknesses of their own sex than men have ; and we may be sure that the failings of the new-comer were quickly discerned, and instantly made known to her male friend and admirer. Even had Shelley remained altogether blind to the lady's defects of temper and intellect, he would have had eventually to choose between the wife and the friend ; and, since the wife still retained his affection, he must have decided sooner or later against Miss Hitchener. But no doubt he soon came to see for himself that the 'sister of his soul,' so far from being a fit helpmate for him in his mission of reforming the world, was not much

more than an ordinary woman with a good many of her sex's weaknesses, and with no great qualities to redeem them. It was unfortunate that Shelley had seen her only on one or two occasions before she came to live with them. Had he met her more frequently he could hardly have failed to discover the limitations of her character, and would have been saved alike from his extravagant over-estimate of her talents, and from his almost equally erroneous judgment of her when she had become the 'brown demon' of his violent aversion.

This is a matter which it is not pleasant or profitable to dwell upon. I will therefore pass over as lightly as possible the remainder of the story. After a residence of nearly five months with the Shelleys, it became evident that Miss Hitchener must be dismissed. This was done as decently as the circumstances allowed. An arrange-

ment was made whereby, in compensation for the sacrifice which she had made in giving up her school, she was to receive an annuity of £100 from Shelley. Whether she declined to receive this, or whether any part of the sum was ever paid to her, does not appear; but looking at the fact of Shelley's straitened means at this time and for some time afterwards, it hardly seems likely that the arrangement resulted in any pecuniary advantage to her. There is a letter of Shelley's, written some little time after she had left him, in which he speaks bitterly and in very unmeasured terms of her. But his disappointment in her had been so great that he could not for some time afterwards think of her calmly or dispassionately. Afterwards no trace is to be found of this episode either in his letters or poems, unless we resolve to find an allusion to her in an obscure passage of "*Epipsychidion*."

One charge which Mr. Mac-Carthy brings against Miss Hitchener I must mention, though merely to pronounce it to be incredible. Some months after her dismissal a mysterious assault was made upon Shelley at Tremadoc, where he was then residing. Some have been disposed to treat this assault as a mere figment of Shelley's imagination; but this can hardly have been the case. No satisfactory explanation of the affair has ever been given; but Mr. Mac-Carthy suggests that the attack was made at Miss Hitchener's instigation on account of the non-payment of her promised annuity! Such an accusation, unsupported as it is by anything more than mere conjecture, deserves only to be unceremoniously dismissed.

A few words must be said as to the after-life of Miss Hitchener. In 1822, she published a poem entitled "The Weald of Kent," calling herself on the

title-page "Miss E. Hitchener," a fact which shows that she was still, at the age of forty, unmarried. There is little poetry in the volume, but there are sense and spirit in the verse, and the numerous notes show that she had a mind which was interested in many things, and which was not ill-stored on historical and antiquarian subjects. From some "Apologetic Stanzas" it appears that she still retained her liberal opinions ; and one stanza seems to show that she had a fond remembrance of her connexion with Shelley. Afterwards, according to Professor Dowden, she became a school-mistress at Edmonton, where she was much respected, and had some reputation as a successful teacher. The same writer rather leads us to suppose that she was still a school-mistress at the time of her death, and that she was never married. This, however, was not the case. She married (when or where

I do not know) an officer in the Austrian service, and went abroad with him. Before leaving the country she deposited with her solicitor, Mr. John Slack, the Shelley letters, together with transcripts of some of her own letters to him. These she never reclaimed, and Mr. Slack heard no more of her, so that what happened to her afterwards is not now known.¹ It is to be regretted that it never seems to have occurred to her that her recollections of Shelley as he was during her acquaintance with him, if written and published, would have been received not ungratefully or unheedfully by the poet's admirers. But, after all, Shelley is his own best biographer, and in the letters in this volume, and in his other writings, we have as complete a picture of his life and character as Marcus Aurelius

¹ These facts were communicated to Mr. T. J. Wise by the late Mr. Slack.

has given us of himself, or Boswell has given us of Dr. Johnson.

Once started on such a theme as Shakespeare or Lamb or Shelley, it is not easy to make an end. All I have written here seems but a mere prelude to a long discourse, wherein, without straying from the subject, most of the matters which affect or interest mankind would come under review. Shelley touched life at so many points that to write adequately of him one would have to deal with all the great questions of religion, morals, metaphysics, and politics which have ever perplexed, and (so far as may be foreseen) must ever perplex the intellect of humanity. Few men have, in so short a life as Shelley's, covered so wide a range of studies, or helped forward so greatly the cause of freedom and enlightenment. He might have claimed, like Heine, that he was a dauntless soldier

in the struggle for emancipation from religious and political tyranny; and for that reason, even if we do not take into account his genius as a poet, he deserves to be gratefully remembered by all who believe that falsehood can never be preferable to truth, that the right is ever to be chosen rather than the expedient, and that the one unpardonable sin is to think that the doing of evil may be the means whereby good may be promoted.

In his Introduction to the Parchment Library volume of selections from the letters of Shelley, Dr. Garnett says that if, among the great poets of the early part of the last century, there was any master of epistolary composition "it was Shelley: Shelley or none." And Matthew Arnold, it is well known (too well known perhaps, since he did not often make so great a mistake) doubted "whether Shelley's delightful Essays and Letters, which deserve to

be far more read than they are now, will not resist the wear and tear of time better, and finally come to stand higher, than his poetry." With two such testimonies as these on record it is needless for me to express an opinion of my own upon the matter. It must be remarked, however, that Shelley as an artist in letter-writing is not seen at his best in the present volume. He was in 1811, as I have already observed, a writer in the making, and not yet made. It was not indeed until the period of his residence in Italy, that he arrived at his highest excellence as a letter-writer.¹ The intellect of Shelley

¹ Was it necessary for him to go there in order that his genius should have its fullest scope and reach its supreme development? It seems so. Was it so also with Byron? Probably, though not so certainly. That Browning also derived much of his inspiration from his residence in Italy is manifest. And indeed it may be said of all our poets that hardly any of them could have failed

was not a very precocious one. Not to mention Chatterton, many writers might be named who at or before nineteen have produced works, which, if of no great value in themselves, have been full of promise for the future. But this, as I have already said, was not the case with Shelley. I can see absolutely no promise in his early verse and prose of the great things which were to follow. But when his intellect began fairly to develop itself—I think we may fix the period as between his twentieth and twenty-first year—it grew with phenomenal rapidity. I do not think that even the mind of Keats passed so quickly from juvenility to maturity as did that of Shelley. From his twentieth to his twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth year his intellect made more progress towards the supreme

to derive from a sojourn in that country a great stimulus to their powers of thought and invention.

heights of achievement which are possible to man, than most men, even men of superior powers, make in a long lifetime. All that he saw, felt, or experienced became matter for his genius to work upon, and was re-created by the alchemy of his imagination into forms of divine beauty, or into music of such magical harmony as had never before been heard by the ears of mortal men. And his mind grew only less rapidly in critical, than it did in creative power. Whether it could be truly said that Shelley was the best of English critics I do not know; but certainly not a little might be said in defence of such an assertion. With a mind of such wonderful power of growth and expansion, controlled as it was by a judgment of such penetrating discernment, it is not too much to say that Shelley, had he lived but ten years longer, would have rivalled, at least in

all the more peculiarly poetical qualities, even Shakespeare himself.¹

The interest of the letters in this volume depends not so much upon their merit as literary compositions—though some of them are, even from that point of view, of singular excellence—as upon the light which they throw upon the growth and development of their author's mind and genius. It is not too much to say that they are the most illuminating documents which we possess for the period of his life which they cover. If we knew absolutely nothing from any other source as to his proceedings during the months from June, 1811, to June, 1812, we should be able to construct from them alone a complete narrative of all that

¹ It would, of course, be foolish to assert that he could ever have rivalled Shakespeare in humour; but that quality, invaluable as it is to a writer of any kind, is certainly not indispensable to the poet.

happened to him during that period. And that narrative might be absolutely relied upon as representing the facts as they appeared to Shelley's mind ; though some allowance might have to be made in a few cases owing to his inability to see things in the light in which they appeared to more prosaic persons. And as the period of these letters was also that of most of the events which were destined to have the strongest influence on the future career of the poet, it need hardly be said that they are on this account, not less important than the later letters from Italy, much as the latter surpass them in point of literary art.

It was at first my intention to go through these letters in detail, pointing out by the way the manner in which they accounted for and explained his actions. But this it now seems unnecessary to do, since it has already been done about as well as it could be

in Dowden's "Life of Shelley." To that book the reader, who seeks for further enlightenment, may confidently be recommended.

Here I will bring these inadequate remarks to an end, not because I would not willingly continue them, but because I fear I have reached "the limits of endurance" as far as the reader's patience is concerned. What I have said I have said, as a famous politician remarked on a certain occasion. Whether it was worth saying I do not know; but I do know that I have derived a good deal of pleasure from saying it. If the reader gets no pleasure from what I have written I shall be sorry; but after all my remarks are at the worst merely a makeweight which can in no way diminish the value of the commodity purchased. And so I take my leave, fully believing that all good Shelleyans (for whom alone this book is intended)

INTRODUCTION

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will receive it in the spirit of their master, whose fixed principle it was to deal with all men as if they were influenced by the best motives only, and were as free from mean or ungenerous thoughts as he was himself.¹

B.D.

¹ It should be stated perhaps that these letters were transcribed in 1896 by Mr. Thos. J. Wise, who in 1900 printed them for private circulation only, in an issue consisting of thirty copies. The book is now reprinted from stereotyped plates then made ; but the Introduction and Notes are now added for the first time.

LETTERS



LETTERS TO
ELIZABETH HITCHENER.

LETTER I.

FIELD PLACE,
[Wednesday] June 5, 1811.

DEAR MADAM,

I desired Locke to be sent to you from London, and the Captain has two books which he will give you—*The Curse of Kehama*, and Ensor's *National Education*. The latter is the production of a very clever man. You may keep the poem as long as you please ; but I shall want the latter in the course of a month or two,—before which, however, I shall have the pleasure of seeing you.

I fear our arguments are too long, and too candidly carried on, to make any figure on paper. Feelings do not look so well as reasonings on black and white. If, however, secure of your own orthodoxy, you would attempt my proselytism, believe me I should be most happy to subject myself to the danger. But I know that you, like myself, are a devotee at the shrine of Truth. Truth is *my* God ; and say he is air, water, earth, or electricity, but I think *yours* is reducible to the same simple Divinityship. Seriously, however : if you *very* widely differ, or differ indeed in the least, from me on the subject of our late argument, the only reason which would induce me to object to a polemical correspondence is that it might deprive *your* time of that application which its value deserves : *mine* is totally vacant.

Walter Scott has published a new poem, *The Vision of Don Roderick*. I

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have ordered it. You shall have it when I have finished. I am not very enthusiastic in the cause of Walter Scott. The aristocratical tone which his writings assume does not prepossess me in his favour, since my opinion is that all poetical beauty ought to be subordinate to the inculcated moral,—that metaphorical language ought to be a pleasing vehicle for useful and momentous instruction. But see Ensor on the subject of poetry.

Adieu.

Your sincere

PERCY SHELLEY.

LETTER II.

FIELD PLACE,
[Tuesday] June 11, 1811.

MY DEAR MADAM,

With pleasure I engage in a correspondence which carries its own recommendation both with my feelings and my reason. I am now, however, an undivided votary of the latter. I do not know which were most *complimentary*: but, as you do not admire, as I do not study, this aristocratical science, it is of little consequence.

Am I to expect an enemy or an ally in Locke? Locke proves that there are no innate ideas; that, in consequence, there can be no innate speculative or practical principles,—thus overturning all appeals of *feeling* in favour of Deity, since that *feeling* must be referable to some origin.

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There must have been a time when it did not exist; in consequence, a time when it began to exist. Since all ideas are derived from the senses, this feeling must have originated from some sensual excitation: consequently the possessor of it may be aware of the time, of the circumstances, attending its commencement. Locke proves this by induction too clear to admit of rational objection. He affirms, in a chapter of whose reasoning I leave your reason to judge, that there is a God: he affirms also, and that in a most unsupported way, that the Holy Ghost dictated St. Paul's writings. Which are we to prefer? The proof or the affirmation?

To a belief in Deity I have no objection on the score of feeling: I would as gladly, perhaps with greater pleasure, admit than doubt his existence. I now do neither: I have not the shadow of a doubt.

My wish to convince you of his non-existence is twofold : first, on the score of truth ; secondly, because I conceive it to be the most summary way of eradicating Christianity. I plainly tell you my intentions and my views. I see a being whose aim, like mine, is virtue. Christianity militates with a high pursuit of it. Hers *is* a high pursuit of it : she is therefore not a Christian. Yet wherefore does she deceive herself ? Wherefore does she attribute to a spurious, irrational (as proved), disjointed system of desultory ethics,—insulting, intolerant theology,—that high sense of calm dispassionate virtue which her own meditations have elicited ? Wherefore is a man who has profited by this error to say : “ You are regarded as a monster in society ; eternal punishment awaits your infidelity ? ” “ I do not believe it,” is your reply. “ Here is a book,” is the rejoinder. “ Pray to the Being who is

here described, and you shall soon believe."

Surely, if a person obstinately *wills* to believe,—determines spite of himself, spite of the refusal of that part of mind to admit the assent in which only can assent rationally be centred, —wills thus to put himself under the influence of passion,—all reasoning is superfluous. Yet I do not suppose that you *act* thus (for action it must be called, as belief is a passion); since the religion does not hold out high morality as an apology for an aberration from reason. In this latter case, reason might sanction the aberration, and fancy become but an auxiliary to its influence.

Dismiss, then, Christianity, in which no arguments can enter. Passion and Reason are in their natures opposite. Christianity is the former; and Deism (for we are now no further) is the latter.

What, then, is a "God"? It is a name which expresses the unknown cause, the suppositious origin of all existence. When we speak of the soul of man, we mean that unknown cause which produces the observable effect evinced by his intelligence and bodily animation, which are in their nature conjoined, and (as we suppose, as we observe) inseparable. The word God, then, in the sense which you take it, analogizes with the universe as the soul of man to his body; as the vegetative power to vegetables; the stony power to stones. Yet, were each of these adjuncts taken away, what would be the remainder? What is man without his soul? He is not man. What are Vegetables without their vegetative power? stones without their stony? Each of these as much constitutes the essence of men, stones, &c., as much make it what it is, as your "God" does the universe. In *this* sense I acknow-

ledge a God ; but merely as a synonym for *the existing power of existence*.

I do not in this (nor can you do, I think) recognize a being which has created that to which it is confessedly annexed as an essence, as that without which the universe would not be what it is. It is therefore the essence of the universe : the universe is the essence of it. It is another word for "the essence of the universe." You recognize not in this an identical being to whom are attributable the properties of virtue, mercy, loveliness. Imagination delights in personification. Were it not for this embodying quality of eccentric fancy, we should be, to this day, without a God. Mars was personified as the God of War, Juno of Policy, &c.

But you have formed in your mind the Deity of Virtue. The personification—beautiful in poetry, inadmissible in reasoning—in the true style of Hindoostanish devotion, you have

adopted. I war against it for the sake of truth. There is such a thing as virtue: but what, who, is this Deity of Virtue? Not the father of Christ, not the source of the Holy Ghost; not the God who beheld with favour the coward wretch Abraham, who built the grandeur of his favourite Jews on the bleeding bodies of myriads, on the subjugated necks of the dispossessed inhabitants of Canaan. But here my instances were as long as the memoir of his furious King-like exploits, did not contempt succeed to hatred. Did I now see him seated in gorgeous and tyrannic majesty, as described, upon the throne of infinitude, if I bowed before him, what would Virtue say? Virtue's voice is almost inaudible; yet it strikes upon the brain, upon the heart. The howl of self-interest is loud; but the heart is black which throbs solely to its note.

You say our theory is the same: I believe it. Then why all this? The

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power which makes me a scribbler knows !

I have just finished a novel of the day—*The Missionary*, by Mrs. Owenson. It dwells on ideas which, when young, I dwelt on with enthusiasm : now I laugh at the weakness which is past.

The Curse of Kehama, which you will have, is my most favourite poem ; yet there is a great error—faith in the character of the divine Kailyal.

Yet I forgot. I intended to mention to you something essential. I recommend reason. Why ? Is it because, since I have devoted myself unreservedly to its influencing, I have never felt *happiness* ? I have rejected all fancy, all imagination : I find that all pleasure resulting to self is thereby completely annihilated. I am led into this egotism, that you may be clearly aware of the nature of reason, as it affects me. I am sincere : will you comment upon this ?

Adieu. A picture of Christ hangs opposite in my room: it is well done, and has met my look at the conclusion of this. Do not believe but that I am sincere: but am I not too prolix?

Yours most sincerely,

PERCY SHELLEY.

LETTER III.

FIELD PLACE.

[*Thursday*] *June 20, 1811.*

MY DEAR MADAM,

Your letter, though dated the 14th, has not reached me until this moment.

"Reason sanctions an aberration from reason." I admit it; or rather, on some subjects, I conceive it to command a dereliction of itself. What I mean by this is an habitual analysis of our own thoughts. It is this habit, acquired by length of solitary labour, never then to be shaken off, which induces gloom; which deprives the being thus affected of any anticipation or retrospection of happiness, and leaves him eagerly in pursuit of virtue,—yet (apparent paradox) pursuing it without the weakest stimulus. It is this, then,

against which I intended to caution you: this is the tree which it is dangerous to eat, but which I have fed upon to satiety.

We both look around us. We find that we exist. We find ourselves reasoning upon the mystery which involves our being. We see virtue and vice; we see light and darkness. Each is separate, distinct: the line which divides them is glaringly perceptible. Yet how racking it is to the soul, when enquiring into its own operations, to find that perfect virtue is very far from attainable,—to find reason tainted by feeling, to see the mind, when analysed, exhibit a picture of irreconcilable inconsistencies, even when perhaps, a moment before, it imagined that it had grasped the fleeting phantom of virtue! But let us dismiss the subject.

It is still my opinion, for reasons before mentioned, that Christianity

strongly militates with virtue. Both yourself and Lyttelton are guilty of a mistake of the term "Christian." A Christian is a follower of the religion which has constantly gone by the name of Christianity, as a Mahometan is of Mahometanism. Each of these professors ceases to belong to the sect which either word means, when they set up a doctrine of their own, irreconcilable with that of either religion except in a few instances in which common and self-evident morality coincides with its tenets. It is then morality, virtue, which they set up as the criterion of their actions, and not the *exclusive* doctrine preached by the founder of any religion. Why, your religion agrees as much with Bramah, Zoroaster, or Mahomet, as with Christ. Virtue is self-evident: consequently I act in unison with its dictates when the doctrines of Christ do not differ from virtue; *there* I follow *them*.

Surely you *then* follow virtue : or you equally follow Bramah and Mahomet as Christ. *Your* Christianity does not interfere with virtue : and why ? Because it is not Christianity !

Yet you still appear to court the delusion. How is this ? Do I know you as well as I know myself ? Then it is that this religion promises a future state, which otherwise were a matter at least of doubt. Let us consider. A false view of any subject, when a true one were attainable, were best avoided, inasmuch as truth and falsehood are in themselves good and bad. All that natural reason enables us to discover is that we now are ; that there was a time when we were not ; that the moment, even, when we are now reasoning is a point before and after which is eternity. Shall we sink into the nothing from whence we have arisen ? But could we have arisen from nothing ? We put an acorn into the ground. In process of time it modifies

the particles of earth, air and water by infinitesimal division, so as to produce an oak. That power which makes it to be this oak we may call its vegetative principle, symbolizing with the animal principle, or soul of animated existence.

An hundred years pass. The oak moulders in putrefaction : it ceases to be what it is : its soul is gone. Is then soul annihilable? Yet one of the properties of animal soul is consciousness of identity. If this is destroyed, in consequence the soul (whose essence this is) must perish. But, as I conceive (and as is certainly capable of demonstration) that nothing can be annihilated, but that everything appertaining to nature, consisting of constituent parts infinitely divisible, is in a continual change, then do I suppose—and I think I have a right to draw this inference—that neither will soul perish ; that, in a future existence, it will lose all conscious-

ness of having formerly lived elsewhere, —will begin life anew, possibly under a shape of which we have no idea.—But we have no right to make hypotheses. This is not one : at least I flatter myself that I have kept clear of supposition.

What think you of the bubbling brooks and mossy banks at Carlton House,—the *allées vertes*, &c. ? It is said that this entertainment will cost £120,000. Nor will it be the last bauble which the nation must buy to amuse this overgrown bantling of Regency. How admirably this growing spirit of ludicrous magnificence tallies with the disgusting splendours of the stage of the Roman Empire which preceded its destruction ! Yet here are a people advanced in intellectual improvement wilfully rushing to a revolution, the natural death of all great commercial empires, which must plunge them in the barbarism from which they are slowly arising.

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DON RODERICK is not yet come
out : when it is, you shall see it.—
Adieu.

Yours most sincerely,

PERCY SHELLEY.

LETTER IV.

FIELD PLACE.

[Tuesday] June 25, 1811.

MY DEAR MADAM,

Do not speak any more of my time thrown away, or you will compel me, in my own defence, to say things which, although they could not share in the nature, would participate in the appearance, of compliment.

What you say of the fallen state of Man I will remark upon. Man is fallen. How is he fallen? You see a thing imperfect and diminutive; but you cannot infer that it had degenerated to this state, without first proving that it had anteriorly existed in a perfect state. Apply this rule, the accuracy of which is unquestionable, to Man. Look at history, even the earliest. What does it tell you of Man? An

ancient tradition recorded in the Bible (upon the truth or falsehood of which this depends) tells you that Man once existed in a superior state. But how are you to believe this? how, in short, is this to be urged as a proof of the truth of the Scriptures, which itself depends upon the previously demonstrated truth or fallacy of *them*?

You look around, you say; and see in everything a wonderful harmony conspicuous. How know you this? Might not some animal, the victim of man's capricious tyranny, itself possibly the capricious tyrant of another, reason thus? "How wretched, how peculiarly wretched, is our state! In man all is harmony. Their buildings arise in method, their society is united by bonds of indissolubility. All nature, but that of *horses*, is harmonical; and *he* is born to misery only because he is a horse." Yet this reasoning is yours. Surely this applies to all nature: surely

this may be called harmony. But then it is the harmony of irregular confusion, which equalizes everything by being itself unequal, wherever it acts.

This brings me again to the point which I aim at—the eternal existence of Intellect. You have read Locke. You are convinced that there are no innate ideas, and that you do not always think when asleep. Yet, let me enquire: in these moments of intellectual suspension do you suppose that the soul is annihilated? You cannot suppose it, knowing the infallibility of the rule—"From nothing, nothing can come: to nothing, nothing can return;" as, by this rule, it *could* not be annihilated, or, if annihilated, could not be capable of resurrection. This brings me to the point. Those around the lifeless corpse are perfectly aware that *it* thinks not: at least, they are aware that, when scattered through all the changes which matter undergoes, it

cannot then think. You have witnessed one suspension of intellect in dreamless sleep: you witness another in death. From the first, you well know that you cannot infer diminution of intellectual force. How contrary then to all analogy to infer annihilation from death, which you cannot prove suspends for a moment the force of mind.—This is not hypothesis, this is not assumption: at least, I am not aware of the admission of either. Willingly would I exclude both—would influence *you* to their total exclusion.

Yet examine this argument with *your* reason: tell me the result.

You wish to “pass among those who, like you, have deceived themselves.” I defy you to produce to me one who *like you* has deceived herself. Deceive the world like yourself, and I will no longer object to the immoral influence of Christianity: in short, let the world be Christians, *like you*. *Let* them not

be Christians, and they *would* not be Christians.

Atheism appears a terrific monster at a distance. Dare to examine it, look at its companions,—it loses half its terrors. In short, treat the word Atheism as you have done that of Christianity: it is not then much. I do not place your wish for justification to prejudice, but to the highest, the noblest, of motives. You have named your God. The worship of *that* God is clear, self-evident, perspicuous: it alone is unceremonious, it alone refuses to contradict natural analogies, can be the subject of no disputes, the countenancer of no misconceptions.

Since we conversed on the subject, I have seen no reason to change my political opinions. In theology,—enquiries into our intellect, its eternity or perishability,—I advance with caution and circumspection. I pursue it in the privacy of retired thought, or the interchange of friendship. But in

politics—here I am enthusiastic. I have reasoned ; and my reason has brought me, on this subject, to the end of my enquiries. I am no aristocrat, nor any “*crat*” at all ; but vehemently long for the time when man may dare to live in accordance with Nature and Reason,—in consequence, with Virtue : to which I firmly believe that Religion, its establishment,—Polity, and *its* establishments,—are the formidable, though destructible, barriers.

We heard from the Captain the other day : I am happy to find that my aunt is recovering.

On Monday I shall be in London on my way to Wales, where I purpose to spend the summer. My excursion will be on foot, for the purpose of better remarking the manners and dispositions of the peasantry. I shall call on you in London, and write to you from the resting-places of my movements.

Your sincere friend,

PERCY SHELLEY.

LETTER V.

CWM ELAN, RHAYADER,
RADNORSHIRE.

Thursday [July 25, 1811.]

MY DEAR MADAM,

Be assured that, as long as you are what you are, as long as I am what I am—which is likely to continue until our *transmigration*—you will always occupy a most exalted place in my warmest esteem. I am no courtier, aristocrat, or loyalist: therefore you may believe that your correspondence would be resigned with the pain of having lost a most valuable thing, when I tell you so.

I am truly sorry to hear that my aunt has not recovered: I shall write to the Captain to-day.

You say that Equality is unattainable: so, will I observe, is Perfection. Yet

they both symbolize in their nature : they both demand that an unremitting tendency towards themselves should be made : and, the nearer society approaches towards this point, the happier will it be. No one has yet been found resolute enough in dogmatizing to deny that Nature made man equal : that society has destroyed this equality is a truth not more incontrovertible. It is found that the vilest cottager is often happier than the proud lord of his manorial rights. Is it fit that the most frightful passions of human nature should be let loose, by an unnatural compact of society, upon this unhappy aristocrat ? Is he not to be pitied when, by an hereditary possession of a fortune which, if divided, would have very different effects, he is, as it were, predestined to dissipation, *ennui*, self-reproach, and (to crown the climax) a deathbed of despairing inutility ? It is often found that the

peasant's life is embittered by the commission of crime.—(Yet can we call it crime? Certainly, when we compare the seizure of a few shillings from the purse of a Nobleman, to preserve a beloved family from starving, to the destruction which the unrestrained propensities of this Nobleman scatter around him, we may almost call it *virtue*).—To what cause are we to refer this? The noble has too much : therefore he is wretched and wicked. The peasant has too little. Are not then the consequences the same from causes which nothing but Equality can annihilate? And, although you may consider equality as impossible, yet, admitting this, a strenuous tendency towards it appears recommended by the consequent diminution of wickedness and misery which my system holds out. Is this to be denied? Ridicule perfection as impossible. Do more : prove it by arguments which are irresistible.

Let the defender of perfection acknowledge their cogency. Still, a strenuous tendency towards this principle, however unattainable, cannot be considered as wrong.

You are willing to dismiss for the present the subject of Religion. As to its influence on individuals, we will. But it is so intimately connected with politics, and augments in so vivid a degree the evils resulting from the system before us, that I will make a few remarks on it. Shall I sum up the evidence? It is needless. The persecutions against the Christians under the Greek Empire, their energetic retaliations and burning each other, the excommunications bandied between the Popes of Rome and the Patriarchs of Constantinople, their influence upon politics (war, assassination, the Sicilian Vespers, the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, Lord G. Gordon's mob, and the state of religious things at

present), can amply substantiate my assertions.

And Liberty!—Poor Liberty! even the religionists who cry so much for thee use thy name but as a mask, that they alone may seize the torch, and show their gratitude by burning their deliverer.

I should doubt the existence of a God who, if he cannot command our reverence by love, surely can have no demand upon it, from Virtue, on the score of terror. It is this empire of terror which is established by Religion. Monarchy is its prototype: Aristocracy may be regarded as symbolizing with its very essence. They are mixed: one can now scarce be distinguished from the other; and equality in politics, like perfection in morality, appears now far removed from even the visionary anticipations of what is called “the wildest theorist.” *I*, then, am wilder than the wildest.

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I am happy that you like *Kehama*.
Is not the chapter where Kailyal
despises the leprosy grand? You
would like also *Joan of Arc* by
Southey.—Whenever I have any new
books, I will send them to you.

I will write again soon. I now
remain, with the highest esteem,

Yours sincerely,

PERCY SHELLEY.

LETTER VI.

CWM ELAN.

[Friday] July 26, 1811.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I wrote to you yesterday in a great hurry ; at least, very much interfered with. I began politics ; and although, from the mental discussion which I have given the subject, I do not think my arguments are inconclusive, still they may be obscure.

What I contend for is this. Were I a moral legislator, I would propose to my followers that they should arrive at the perfection of morality. Equality is natural : at least, many evils totally inconsistent with a state which symbolizes with Nature prevail in every system of inequality. I will assume this point. Therefore, even although it be your opinion, or my

opinion, that equality is unattainable except by a parcel of peas, or beans, still political virtue is to be estimated in proportion as it approximates to this ideal point of perfection, however unattainable. But what can be worse than the present aristocratical system? Here are, in England, 10,000,000, only 500,000 of whom live in a state of ease: the rest earn their livelihood with toil and care. If therefore these 500,000 aristocrats, who possess resources of various degrees of immensity, were to permit these resources to be resolved into their original stock (that is, entirely to destroy it), if each earned his own living (which I do not see is at all incompatible with the height of intellectual refinement), then I affirm that each would be happy and contented—that crime, and the temptation to crime, would scarcely exist.—“But this paradise is all visionary.”—Why is it visionary? Have you tried? The

first inventor of a plough doubtless was looked upon as a mad innovator: he who altered it from its original absurd form doubtless had to contend with great prejudices in its disfavour. But is it not worth while that (although it may not be *certain*) the remaining 9,500,000 victims to its infringement [should] make some exertions in favour of a system evidently founded on the first principles of natural justice? If two children were placed together in a desert island, and they found some scarce fruit, would not justice dictate an equal division? If this number is multiplied to any extent of which number is capable,—if these children are men, families,—is not justice capable of the same extension and multiplication? Is it not the same? Are not its decrees invariable? and, for the sake of his earth-formed schemes, has the politician a right to infringe upon that which itself consti-

tutes all right and wrong? Surely not.

I know *why* you differ from me on this point. It is because you suspect yourself of partiality for the cause with which you agree. I must say, my friend and fellow-traveller in the path of truth, that this is wrong. You are unworthy of the suspicion with which you regard yourself.

I am now with people who, strange to say, never *think* : I have, however, much more of my own society than of theirs. Nature is here marked with the most impressive characters of lordliness and grandeur. Once I was tremulously alive to tones and scenes : the habit of analysing feelings, I fear, does not agree with this. It is spontaneous ; and, when it becomes subject to consideration, ceases to exist. But you do right to indulge feeling, where it does not militate with reason : I wish I could too.

This valley is covered with trees: so are partly the mountains that surround it. Rocks, piled on each other to an immense height, and clouds intersecting them,—in other places, waterfalls midst the umbrage of a thousand shadowy trees,—form the principal features of the scenery. I am not wholly uninfluenced by its magic in my lonely walks. But I long for a thunder-storm.

Adieu: let me soon hear from you.

Your most sincere friend,

P. B. SHELLEY.

LETTER VII.

LONDON.

[*Saturday*] Aug. 10, 1811.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I understand that there is a letter for me at Cwm Elan. I have not received it. Particular business has occasioned my sudden return. I shall be at Field Place to-morrow, and shall possibly see you before September.

My engagements have hindered much devotion of time to a consideration of the subject of our discussion. I here see palaces the thirtieth part of which would bless with every requisite of habitation, their pampered owners; theatres converted from schools of morality into places for the inculcation of abandonment of every moral principle; whilst the haughty aristocrat

and the commercial monopolist unite in sanctioning by example the depravities to which the importations of the latter give rise.

All monopolies are bad. I do not however, when condemning commercial aggrandizement, think it in the least necessary to panegyrize hereditary accumulation. Both are flagrant encroachments on liberty: neither can be used as an antidote for the poison of the other. We will suppose even the best aristocrat. Yet look at our noblemen: take the Court Calendar: hear even what the world, who judges favourably of grandeur, narrates concerning their actions. The very encomia which it confers are insults to reason. Take the best aristocrat. He monopolizes a large house, gold dishes, glittering dresses: his very servants are decked in magnificence. How does one monopoly differ from another,—that of the mean Duke from

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that of the mean pacer between the pillars of the Exchange?

Having once established the position that a state of equality, if attainable, were preferable to any other, I think that the unavoidable inference must induce us to confess the irrationality of Aristocracy. Intellectual inequality could never be obviated until moral perfection be attained: then all distinctions would be levelled.

Adieu.

LETTER VIII.

[Monday,] August 19th, [1811.]

MY DEAR MADAM,

Your letter yesterday disappointed me; not because it set me right in one of those trivial sacrifices to custom which I am wont, through their real unimportance, to overlook, but because, in place of liberal ideas which have ever marked those characters of your mind which I have had an opportunity of observing, I noticed that you said: "though *you* should have disregarded the real difference that exists between us." You remind me thus of a misfortune which I could never have obviated: not that the sturdiest aristocrat could suppose that a real difference subsisted between me, who am sprung

from a race of rich men, and you, whom talents and virtue have lifted from the obscurity of poverty. If there is any difference, surely the balance of real distinction would fall on your side. You remind me of what I hate, despise, and shudder at, what willingly I would not : and the part which I can emancipate myself from, in this detestable coil of primæval prejudice, that *will* I free myself from. Have I not forsworn all this ? Am I not a worshipper of Equality ? It was the custom, even with the Jews, never to insult the Gods of other nations : why then do you put a sarcasm so galling upon the object of my adoration ?

Let us consider. In a former letter you say that "Nature has decidedly distinguished degrees among a degenerate race." Admit for a moment that the composition of soul varies in every recipient, still Nature must have been blind to give a kingdom to a fool,

a dukedom to a sensualist, an empire to a tyrant. If she *thus* distinguishes degrees, how does the wildest anarchy differ from Nature's law? or rather, how are they not, by this account, synonymous?—Again: Soul may be proved to be, not that which changes its first principles in every new recipient, but an elementary essence, an essence of first principles which bears the mark of casual or of intended impressions. For instance: the non-existence of innate ideas is proved by Locke; he challenges any one to find an idea which *is* innate. This is conclusive. If no ideas are innate, then all ideas must take their origin subsequent to the transfusion of the soul. In consequence of this indisputable truth, intellect varies but in the impressions with which causality or inattention has marked it. Where is now *Nature*, distinguishing degrees? or rather do you not see that Art has

assumed that office, even in the gifts of the mind ?

I see the *impropriety* of dining with you—even of calling upon you. I shall not willingly, however, give up the friendship and correspondence of one whom, however superior to me, my arrogance calls an equal.

Adieu.

Yours most sincerely,

PERCY S.

Excuse the haste in which I write this.

LETTER IX.

YORK. MISS DANCER'S, CONEY STREET.
[Tuesday, 8 October, 1811.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May I still call you so? or have I forfeited, by the equivocality of my conduct, the esteem of the wise and virtuous? have I disgraced the professions of that virtue which has been the idol of my love, whose votaries have been the brothers and sisters of my soul?

When last I saw you, I was about to enter into the profession of physic. I told you so. I represented my views as unembarrassed; myself at liberty to experiment upon morality, uninfluenced by the possibility of giving pain to others. You will know that my relational connexions were such as

could have no hold but that of consanguinity: how weak this is may be referred to the bare feeling to explain. I saw you. In one short week, how changed were all my prospects! How are we the slaves of circumstances! how bitterly I curse their bondage! Yet this was unavoidable.

You will enquire how I, an Atheist, chose to subject myself to the ceremony of marriage,—how my conscience could consent to it. This is all I am now anxious of elucidating. Why I united myself thus to a female, as it is not in itself immoral, can make no part in diminution of my rectitude: *this*, if misconceived, may.

I am indifferent to reputation: all are not. Reputation, and its consequent advantages, are rights to which every individual may lay claim, unless he has justly forfeited them by an immoral action. Political rights also, which justly appertain equally to each, ought

only to be forfeited by immorality. Yet both of these must be dispensed with, if two people live together without having undergone the ceremony of marriage. How unjust this is! Certainly it is not inconsistent with morality to evade these evils. How useless to attempt, by singular examples, to renovate the face of society, until reasoning has made so comprehensive a change as to emancipate the experimentalist from the resulting evils, and the prejudice with which his opinion (which ought to have weight, for the sake of virtue) would be heard by the immense majority!—These are my reasons.

Will you write to me? Shall we proceed in our discussions of Nature and Morality? Nay more: will you be my friend, may I be yours? The shadow of worldly impropriety is effaced by *my* situation. Our strictest intercourse would excite none of those

disgusting remarks with which *females* of the present day think right to load the friendships of opposite sexes. Nothing would be transgressed by your even living with us. Could you not pay me a visit? My dear friend Hogg, that noble being, is with me, and will be always: but my wife will abstract from our intercourse the shadow of impropriety. How happy should I be to see you! There is no need to tell you this; and my happiness is not so great that it becomes a friend to be sparing in that society which constitutes its only charm.

I will close this letter. I have enough to say, but will wait for your answer until I write again.

Your great friend,

P. B. SHELLEY.

LETTER X.

YORK,

[Wednesday, 16] October, 1811.

I write to-day, because not to answer such a letter as yours instantly, eagerly—I will add, gratefully—were impossible. But I shall be at Cuckfield on Friday night. My dearest friend (for I will call you so), you, who understand my motives to action, which, I flatter myself, unisonize with your own,—you, who can condemn the world's prejudices, whose views are mine,—I will dare to say I *love*: nor do I risk the possibility of that degrading and contemptible interpretation of this sacred word, nor do I risk the supposition that the lump of organized matter which enshrines thy soul excites the love which that soul alone dare

claim. Henceforth will I be yours—yours with truth, sincerity, and unreserve. Not a thought shall arise which shall not seek its responsion in your bosom; not a motive of action shall be unenwafted by your cooler reason: and, by so doing, do I not choose a criterion more infallible than my own consciousness of right and wrong (though this may not be required)? for what conflict of a frank mind is more terrible than the balance between two opposing importances of morality? This is surely the only wretchedness which a mind who only acknowledges virtue its master can feel.

I leave York to-night for Cuckfield, where I shall arrive on Friday. That mistaken man, my father, has refused us money, and commanded that our names should never be mentioned. I had thought that this blind resentment had long been banished to the regions of Dullness, comedies and farces; or

was used merely to augment the difficulties, and consequently the attachment, of the hero and heroine of a modern novel. I have written frequently to this thoughtless man, and am now determined to visit him, in order to try the force of truth; though I must confess I consider it nearly as hyperbolical as "music rending the knotted oak." Some philosophers have ascribed indefiniteness to the powers of intellect; but I question whether it ever would make an ink-stand capable of free agency. Is this too severe? But, you know, I, like the God of the Jews, set myself up as no respecter of persons; and relationship is considered by me as bearing that relation to reason which a band of straw does to fire. I love *you* more than any relation; I profess you are the sister of my soul, its dearest sister; and I think the component parts of that soul must undergo complete

dissolution before its sympathies can perish.

Some philosophers have taken a world of pains to persuade us that congeniality is but romance. Certainly, reason can never either account for, or prove the truth of, feeling. I have considered it in every possible light; and reason tells me that death is the boundary of the life of man: yet I feel, I believe, the direct contrary. The senses are the only inlets of knowledge, and there is an inward sense that has persuaded me of this.

How I digress! how does one reasoning lead to another, involving a chain of endless considerations! Certainly, everything is connected. Both in the moral and physical world there is a train of events; and (though not likely) it is impossible to deny that the turn which my mind has taken originated from the conquest of England by William of Normandy.

By the bye, I have something to talk to you of—Money. I covet it.—“What, you? you a miser! you desire gold! you a slave to the most contemptible of ambitions!”—No, I am not; but I still desire money, and I desire it because I think I know the use of it. It commands labour, it gives leisure; and to give leisure to those who will employ it in the forwarding of truth is the noblest present an individual can make to the whole. I will open to you my views. On my coming to the estate which, worldly considered, is mine, but which actually I have not more, perhaps not so great a right to, as you,—justice demands that it should be shared between my sisters. Does it, or does it not? Mankind are as much my brethren and sisters as they: *all* ought to share. This cannot be; it must be confined. But thou art a sister of my soul, *he* is its brother: surely these have a right.

Consider this subject, write to me on it. Divest yourself of individuality: dare to place self at a distance, which I know you can: spurn those bugbears, gratitude, obligation, and modesty. The world calls these "virtues." They are well enough for the world. It wants a chain: it hath forged one for itself. But with the sister of my soul I have no obligation: to her I feel no gratitude: I stand not on etiquette, alias insincerity. The ideas excited by these words are varying, frequently unjust, always selfish. Love, in the sense in which *we* understand it, needs not these *succedanea*.—Consider the question which I have proposed to you. I know you are above that pretended confession of your own imbecility which the world has nicknamed modesty, and you must be conscious of your own high worth. To underrate your powers is an evil of greater magnitude than the contrary: the former benumbs, whilst the

latter excites to action. My friend Hogg and myself consider our property in common: that the day will arrive when *we* shall do the same is the wish of my soul, whose consummation I most eagerly anticipate.

My uncle is a most generous fellow. Had he not assisted us, we should still [have] been chained to the filth and *commerce* of Edinburgh. Vile as aristocracy is, commerce—purse-proud ignorance and illiterateness—is more contemptible.

I still see Religion to be immoral. When I contemplate these gigantic piles of superstition—when I consider, too, the leisure for the exercise of mind which the labour which erected them annihilated—I set them down as so many retardations of the period when Truth becomes omnipotent. Every useless ornament—the pillars, the iron railings, the juttings of wainscot, and (as Southey says) the cleaning of grates

—are all exertions of bodily labour which—though trivial, separately considered,—when united, destroy a vast proportion of this invaluable leisure. How many things could we do without ! How unnecessary are *mahogany* tables, silver vases, myriads of viands and liquors, expensive printing,—that, worst of all. Look even [around some] little habitation,—the dirtiest cottage, which [exhibits] myriads of instances where ornament is sacrificed [? preferred] to cleanliness or leisure.

Whither do I wander ? Certainly, I wish to prove, by my own proper prowess, that the chain which I spoke of is real.

The letter at Field Place has been opened and read, exposed to all the remarks of impertinence : not that they understood it.

Henceforth I shall have no secrets from you ; and indeed I have much then to tell you—wonderful changes !

Direct to me at the Captain's until you
hear again: but I only stay two days
in Sussex,—but I shall see you.

Sister of my soul, adieu.

With, I hope, eternal love,

Your

PERCY SHELLY.

LETTER XI.

CUCKFIELD.

[*Saturday, 19 October, 1811.*?]

I do not know that I shall have time to see you, my dear friend, whilst in Sussex. On Monday or Tuesday I *must* return. The intervening periods will be employed in the hateful task of combating prejudice and mistake. Yet our souls can meet, for these become embodied on paper: all else is even emptier than the breath of fame.

I omitted mentioning something in my last: 'tis of your visiting us. You say that *at some remote period, &c.* What is this remote period? when will it arrive? The term is indefinite, and friendship cannot be satisfied with this. I do not mean to-day, to-morrow, or this week; but the time approaches when you need not attend the business

of the school: *then* you have your own choice to make of the place of your intermediate residence. If that choice were in favour of me!

I shall come to live in this county. My friend Hogg, Harriet, my new sister, . . . could but be added to these the sister of my soul! *That* I cannot hope: but still she may visit us.

I have been convinced of the eventual omnipotence of mind over matter. Adequacy of motive is sufficient to anything: and *my* Golden Age is when the present potence will become omnipotence. This will be the millennium of Christians, when "the lion shall lie down with the lamb": though neither will it be accomplished to complete a prophecy, nor by the intervention of a miracle. This has been the favourite idea of all religions, the thesis on which the impassioned and benevolent have delighted to dwell. Will it not be the task of human reason, human powers,—

whose progression in improvement has been so great since the remotest tradition, tracing general history to the point where now we stand? The series is infinite—can never end!

Now you will laugh at what I am about to tell you. Whence think [you] this reasoning has arisen? Just [conceive] its possible origin! Never [could] you have [conceived] that three days on the outside of a coach caused it. [Yet] so it is. I am now at Cuckfield; I arrived this morning; and, though three nights without sleep, I feel now neither sleepy nor fatigued. *This* is adequacy of motive. During my journey I had the proposed end in view of accumulating money to myself for the motives which I stated in my last letter.

I know I have something more to tell you—I forget what. The Captain is talking.

I must settle my plan of attack to-morrow.

Adieu, my dear friend.

Your

PERCY S.

I am happy to hear what I have just heard. You are to come to dine here, and bring Emma, on Monday 21st, in the coach.

LETTER XII.

MR. STRICKLAND'S, BLAKE ST., YORK.

[*Saturday, 26 October, 1811.*?]

It is no "generosity": it is justice—bare, simple justice. Oh, to what a state must poor human nature have arrived when simply to do our duty merits praise! Let us delight in the anticipation (though it may not be *our* lot to breathe that air of paradise) that the time will arrive when all that now is called generosity will be simply, barely duty. But you *shall not* refuse it. Private feelings must not be gratified at the expense of public benefit by your refusal: deeply would the latter suffer. I know you speak from conviction; nor, except from conviction, should I allow you to act as far as concerns me. It is impossible that you should do otherwise. Yet I hope to

+ produce that conviction. You cannot be convinced—quite convinced. It is impossible that any one should thoroughly know themselves, particularly in an instance like this, where self-deceit is so likely to creep in from the contagious sophistications of society, and, assuming the garb of virtue, represent itself to you as its substance. I know you to be superior to that mock-modesty of self-depreciation: this therefore has no weight. See yourself, then, as you are. I esteem you more than I esteem myself. Am I not right therefore in giving you at least equal opportunities of conferring on mankind the benefits of that which has excited this esteem? You may *then* share your possessions with that friend whom I ardently long to know and to love, but who must receive the tribute of gratitude from you,—though, if she has made you what you are, what claims may not just retribution make upon me in her behalf?

I have thus said what I think, at least two years before I can accomplish the projects which I have to execute. "It is the mere prodigality of promise," would the slave of others' opinion exclaim, "never to be executed: two months will dissipate the sickly ravings; it demands two years of uniform opinion." Let them thus rave,—'tis their element! But, whilst the sister of my soul, the friend of my heart, knows its unchangeableness, how futile are these gnat-bites! But it is necessary that the world should not know this: to preserve in some measure the good opinion of Prejudice is necessary to its destruction. This must be the most secret of communications: thine are most sacredly secret to me. But the time you lose in thus acquiring money for the noblest of human purposes would be saved by your acceptance of my offer. There are two years, however, to argue this subject in. We

have now begun : I am convinced that I shall conquer.

When may I see the woman who indeed deserves my love, if she was thy instructress? Let not the period be very distant. I already reverence her as a mother. How useful are such characters! how they propagate intellect, and add to the list of the virtuous and free! Every error conquered, every mind enlightened, is so much added to the progression of human perfectibility. Sure, such as you, then, ought to possess the amplest leisure for a task to the completion of which each of those excellencies which excite my love for you is so adapted. Believe that I do not flatter; suspect me not of rash judgment. My judgment of you has been unimpassioned, though *now* unimpassionateness is over, and I *could* not believe you other than the being I have hitherto considered as enshrined in the identity of Elizabeth Hitchener.

I hesitate not a moment to write to you : rare though it be in this existence, communion with you can unite mental benefit with *pure* gratification. I will explain, however, the circumstances which caused my marriage : these must certainly have caused much conjecture in your mind.

Some time ago, when my sister was at Mrs. Fenning's school, she contracted an intimacy with Harriet. At that period I attentively watched over my sister, designing, if possible, to add her to the list of the good, the disinterested, the free. I desired therefore to investigate Harriet's character : for which purpose I called on her, requested to correspond with her, designing that *her* advancement should keep pace with, and possibly accelerate, that of my sister. Her ready and frank acceptance of my proposal pleased me ; and, though with ideas the remotest to those which have led to this conclusion of our

intimacy, [I] continued to correspond with her for some time. The frequency of her letters became greater during my stay in Wales. I answered them: they became interesting. They contained complaints of the irrational conduct of her relations, and the misery of living where she could *love* no one. Suicide was with her a favourite theme, her total uselessness was urged in its defence. This I admitted, supposing she could prove her inutility, [and that she] was powerless. Her letters became more and more [gloomy]. At length one assumed a tone of such despair as induced me to quit Wales precipitately. I arrived in London. I was shocked at observing the alteration of her looks. Little did I divine its cause: she had become violently attached to me, and feared that I should not return her attachment. Prejudice made the confession painful. It was impossible to avoid being much affected I promised

to unite my fate with hers. I stayed in London several days, during which she recovered her spirits. I had promised at her bidding to come again to London. They endeavoured to compel her to return to a school where malice and pride embittered every hour : she wrote to me. I came to London. I proposed marriage, for the reasons which I have given you, and she complied.— Blame me if thou wilt, dearest friend, for *still* thou art dearest to me : yet pity even this error, if thou blamest me. If Harriet be not, at sixteen, all that you are at a more advanced age, assist me to mould a really noble soul into all that can make its nobleness useful and lovely. Lovely it is now, or I am the weakest slave of error.

Adieu to this subject until I hear again from you. Write soon, in pity to my suspense.

We did not call on Whitton as we passed. We find he means absolutely

nothing: he talks of disrespect, duty, &c.

I observed that you were much shocked at my mother's depravity. I have heard some reasons (and as mere reasons they are satisfactory) that there is no such thing as moral depravity. But it does not prove the non-existence of a thing that it is not discoverable by reason: *feeling* here affords us sufficient proof. I pity those who have not this demonstration, though I can scarce believe that such exist.

Those who *really feel* the being of a God, have the best right to believe it. They may, indeed, pity those who do not; they may pity me: but, until I feel it, I must be content with the substitute, Reason.

Here is a letter!—well, answer some of it,—though I allow 'tis terribly long.

Southey has published something new—*The Bridal of Fernandez*: have you

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seen it? Have you read *St. Leon* or
Caleb Williams?

Adieu, dear friend. Believe me

Ever yours sincerely,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Have you heard anything of Cap-
tain P[ilfold's] proceedings at F[ield]
P[lace]?—I have more to say, but no
more room, so adieu.

LETTER XIII.

[KESWICK,

Friday, 8 November, 1811. ?]

My friend will be surprised to hear of me from Keswick in Cumberland : more so will [she] be astonished at the occasion. It is a thing that makes my blood run cold to think of. I almost lose my confidence in the power of truth, its unalterableness. Human nature appears so depraved. Even those in whom we place unlimited confidence, between whom and yourself suspicion never came, appear depraved as the rest. High powers appear but to present opportunities for occasioning superior misery. Can it be thus always ?

You know how I have described Hogg,—my enthusiasm in his defence, my love for him. You know I have considered him but little below perfec-

tion. I have spoken to you of him—have described him not with the exaggerations but with the truth of friendship. I have resolved, because I am your friend, to make you the depository of a secret : it is to me a most terrible one.

Hogg is a mistaken man—vilely, dreadfully mistaken. But you shall hear ; then judge of the extent of the evil which I deplore. That he whom my fond expectations had pictured the champion of virtue, the enemy of prejudice, should himself become the meanest slave of the most contemptible of prejudices, is indeed dreadful. But listen. How fast you read this ! I fancy I behold you !

You know I came to Sussex to settle my affairs, and left Harriet at York under the protection of Hogg. You know the implicit faith I had in him, the unalterableness of my attachment, the exalted thoughts I entertained of

✓ his excellence. Can you then conceive that he would have attempted to *seduce my wife*? that he should have chosen the very time for this attempt when I most confided in him, when least I doubted him? Yet when did I *ever* doubt him? Yet, my friend, this is the case. And such an attempt! You may conceive his sophistry; you may conceive the energy of vice, for energy is inseparable from high powers: but never could you conceive, never having experienced it, that resistless and pathetic eloquence of his, never the illumination of that countenance, on which I have sometimes gazed till I fancied the world could be reformed by gazing too! You—you have never seen him, never heard him; or Harriet would have stood first in your regards as the heroic, or the unfeeling, who could have done other than as he directed. The *latter* she is not.

Conjecture, conceive, friend, how I

love you! how firm my reliance is on your principles, how impossible to be shaken is my faith in your nobleness! Then, then imagine what I have felt at losing by so terrible a reverse, a friend *like* you—lost too not only to me but to the world! Virtue has lost one of its defenders, Vice has gained a proselyte. The thought makes me shudder! But must it be thus? Cannot I prevent it? cannot I reason with him? Is he dead, cold, gone, annihilated? None, none of these! therefore *not* irretrievable—*not* fallen like Lucifer, never to rise again!

Before I quitted York, I spoke to him. Our conversation was long. He was silent, pale, over-whelmed. The suddenness of the disclosure—and oh I hope its heinousness—had affected him. I told him that I pardoned him—freely, fully, completely pardoned; that not the least anger against him possessed me. His vices, and not

himself, were the objects of my horror and my hatred. I told him I yet ardently panted for his real welfare ; but that ill-success in crime and misery appeared to me an earnest of its opposite in benevolence. I engaged him to promise to write to me. You can conjecture that my letters to him will be neither infrequent nor short.

I have little time to-day, but I pay this short tribute to friendship. Never, dearest friend, may you experience a disappointment so keen as mine ! Write. I am at Mr. D. Crosthwaite's, Townhead, Keswick, Cumberland. The scenery is awfully grand : it even affects me in such a time as this. Adieu : write to me. I am in need of your sympathy.

Harriet and her sister liked this part of the country ; and I was, at the moment of our sudden departure, indifferent to all places.

A letter, I suppose, is waiting for me

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at York. H. will forward them. Adieu, ✓
my almost only friend.

Yours eternally, sincerely,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

LETTER XIV.

[CHESNUT COTTAGE, KESWICK.

Tuesday, 12 November, 1811].

YOUR letter of the 1st hath this moment reached me. I answer it according to our agreement, which shall be inviolable.

Truly did you say that, at our arising in the morning, Nature assumes a different aspect. Who could have conjectured the circumstances of my last letter? Friend of my soul, this is terrible, dismaying: it makes one's heart sink, it withers vital energy. Had a common man done so, 'twould have been but a common event, but a common mistake. *Now*, if for a moment the soul forgets (as at times it will) that it must enshrine the body (for others, how beautiful does death

appear, what a release from the crimes and miseries of mortality! To be condemned to feed on the garbage of grinding misery, that hungry hyæna, mortal life!—But no! I will not, I do not, repine. Dear being, I am thine again: thy happiness shall again predominate over this fleeting tribute to self-interest. Yet who would not feel now? Oh 'twere as reckless a task to endeavour to annihilate perception while sense existed, as to blunt the sixth sense to such impressions as these!—Forgive me, dearest friend! I pour out my whole soul to you. I write by fleeting intervals: my pen runs away with my senses. The impassionateness of my sensations grows upon me.

Your letter, too, has much affected me. Never, with my consent, shall that intercourse cease which has been the day-dawn of my existence, the sun which has shed warmth on the

cold drear length of the anticipated prospect of life. Prejudice might demand this sacrifice, but she is an idol to whom *we* bow not. The world might demand it; its opinion might require: but the cloud which fleets over yon mountain were as important to our happiness, to our usefulness. This must *never* be, never whilst this existence continues; and, when Time has enrolled us in the list of the departed, surely this one friendship will survive to bear our identity to heaven.

What is love, or friendship? Is it something material—a ball, an apple, a plaything—which must be taken from one to be given to another? Is it capable of no extension, no communication? Lord Kaimes defines love to be a particularization of the general passion. But this is the love of sensation, of sentiment—the absurdest of absurd vanities: it is the love of

pleasure, not the love of happiness. The one is a love which is self-centred, self-devoted, self-interested: it desires its own interest: it is the parent of jealousy. Its object is the plaything which it desires to monopolize. Selfishness, monopoly, is its very soul; and to communicate to others part of this love were to destroy its essence, to annihilate this chain of straw. But love, the love which *we* worship,—virtue, heaven, disinterestedness—in a word, Friendship,—which has as much to do with the senses as with yonder mountains; that which seeks the good of all,—the good of its object first, not because that object is a minister to its pleasures, not merely because it even contributes to its happiness, but because it is really worthy, because it has powers, sensibilities, is capable of abstracting self, and loving virtue for virtue's own loveliness,—desiring the happiness of others

not from the obligation of fearing hell or desiring heaven ; but for pure, simple, unsophisticated virtue.

You will soon hear again. Adieu, my dearest friend. Continue to believe that when I am insensible to your excellence, I shall cease to exist.

Yours most sincerely,
inviolably, eternally,

PERCY S.

I have filled my sheet before I was aware of it. I told Harriet of your scruples, for which there is not the slightest foundation. You have mistaken her character, if you consider her a slave to this meanest of mean jealousies. She desires to add something : I have scarcely room for her.

Southey lives at Keswick. I have been contemplating the outside of his house. More of him hereafter.

Write : I need not tell you, write. I am in need of your letters.

Harriet desires her love to you and

ELIZABETH HITCHENER. 83

begs you will not entertain so unfavourable an opinion of her. She desires me to say that she longs to see you,—to welcome you to our habitation, wherever we are, as my best friend and sister.

Direct me at Chesnut Cottage,
Mr. Dayer's, Keswick, Cumberland.

LETTER XV.

KESWICK, CHESNUT HILL, CUMBERLAND.

[Thursday, 14 November, 1811].

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

Probably my letters have not left Keswick sufficiently long for your answer, I have more to tell you, however, which relates to this late terrible affair.

The day we left him, he wrote several letters to me,—the first evidently in the frenzy of his disappointment (for I had not told him the *time* of our departure). “I *will* have Harriet’s forgiveness, or blow my brains out at her feet.” The others, being written in moments of tranquillity, appeased immediate alarm on that score. You are already surprised, shocked : I can conceive it. Oh, it is terrible ! this stroke

has almost withered my being ! Were it not for that dear friend whose happiness I so much prize, which at some future period I may perhaps constitute,—did I not live for an end, an aim, sanctified, hallowed,—I *might* have slept in peace. Yet no—not quite that : I might have been a colonist of Bedlam.

Stay : I promised to relate the circumstances. I will proceed historically.

I had observed that Harriet's behaviour to my friend had been greatly altered : I saw she regarded him with prejudice and hatred. I saw it with great pain, and remarked it to her. Her dark hints of his unworthiness alarmed me, yet alarmed me vaguely ; for, believe me, this alarm was untainted with the slightest suspicion of his disloyalty to virtue and friendship. Conceive my horror when, on pressing the conversation, the secret of his un-

faithfulness was divulged ! I sought him, and we walked to the fields beyond York. I desired to know fully the account of this affair. I heard it *from him*, and I believe he was sincere. All I can recollect of that terrible day was that I pardoned him—freely, fully pardoned him ; that I would still be a friend to him, and hoped soon to convince him how lovely virtue was ; that his crime, not himself, was the object of my detestation ; that I value a human being, not for what it has been, but for what it is ; that I hoped the time would come when he would regard this horrible error with as much disgust as I did. He said little : he was pale, terror-struck, remorseful.

This character is *not* his own : it sits ill upon him,—it will not long be his. His account was this. He came to Edinburgh. He saw me ; he saw Harriet. He loved her (I use the word because he used it. You com-

prehend the different ideas it excites under different modes of application). He loved her. This passion, so far from meeting with resistance, was encouraged,—purposely encouraged, from motives which then appeared to him not wrong. On our arrival at York, he avowed it. Harriet forbade other mention; yet forbore to tell me, hoping she might hear no more of it. On my departure from York to Sussex (when you saw me), he urged the same suit,—urged it with arguments of detestable sophistry. “There is no injury to him who knows it not:—why is it wrong to permit my love, if it does not alienate affection?” These failed of success. At last, Harriet talked to him much of its immorality: and (though I fear her arguments were such as *could not* be logically superior to his) he confessed to her his conviction of having acted wrong, and, as some expiation, proposed instantly to inform

me by letter of the whole. This Harriet refused to permit, fearing its effect upon my mind at such a distance : she could not know *when* I should return home. I returned the very next day.

This, as near as I recollect, was the substance of what cool consideration can extract from his account. The circumstances are true : Harriet's account coincides.

I have since written to him—frequently, and at great length. His letters are exculpatory : you shall see them.—Adieu at present to the subject.

No, my dearest friend, I will never cease to write to you. I never can cease to think of you.

Happiness, fleeting creation of circumstances, where art thou? I read your letter with delight ; but this delight is even mixed with melancholy. And you ! Tell me that you too are unhappy,—the cup of my misfortunes is then completed to the dregs. Yet

did you not say that we should stimulate each other to virtue? Shall I be the first to fail? No! This listless torpor of regret will never do—it never shall possess me. Behold me then reassuming myself, deserving your esteem,—you, my second self!

Harriet has laughed at your suppositions. She invites you to our habitation wherever we are: she does this sincerely, and bids me send her love to you.

Eliza, her sister, is with us. She is, I think, a woman rather superior to the generality. She is prejudiced; but her prejudices I do not consider unvanquishable. Indeed, I have already conquered some of them.

The scenery here is awfully beautiful. Our window commands a view of two lakes, and the giant mountains which confine them. But the object most interesting to my feelings is

Southey's habitation. He is now on a journey: when he returns, I shall call on him.

Adieu, dearest friend.

Ever yours, with true devotement
and love,

PERCY SHELLEY.

LETTER XVI.

KESWICK, CUMBERLAND.

[*Wednesday, 20 November, 1811.*]

WRITING is slow, soulless, incommunicative. I long to talk with you. My soul is bursting. Ideas, millions of ideas, are crowding into it: it pants for communion with you.)

Your letter, too, has affected me deeply. You must not quite despair of human nature. Our conceptions are scarcely vivid enough to picture the degree of crime, of degradation, which sullies human society: but what words are equal to express their inadequacy to picture its hidden virtue? My friend, my dear only friend, never doubt virtue so long as yourself exists. Be yourself a living proof that human nature is a creation of its own, resolves its own determinations; that on the

vividness of these depends the intensity of our characters.

It was a terrible, a soul-appalling fall : but it was not, it could not be, a fall never to rise again. It shall not, if I can retrieve it. He desires to live with us again. His supplications (if his letters are, as mine have been, the language of his soul) have much of ardency, passionateness, and sincerity, in them. But this must not be. I have endeavoured to judge on this subject, if possible, with disinterestedness ; and I think I owe to Harriet's happiness and his reformation that this should not be. Keen as might have been my feelings, I think, if virtue compelled it, I could have lived with him now.

You say he mistook the love of virtue for the practice. I think that you have endeavoured to separate cause and effect. No cause do I esteem so indissolubly annexed to its effect as the

real sincere love of virtue to the disinterested practice of its dictates. You seem to have confounded love of virtue with *talking* of the love of virtue. Yet was not his conduct most nobly disinterested at Oxford? This appeared real love of virtue. Then what a fall! But not a remediless one. How are we to tell a tree? Not even by its fruits. Are changes possible so quick, so sudden? I am immersed in a labyrinth of doubt. My friend, I need your advice, your reason: my own seems almost withered.

Will you come here in your Christmas holidays? Harriet delights so much in this place that I do not think I *can* quit it. Will you come here? The poison-blast of calumny will not dare to infect you. Besides, what is the world? Eliza Westbrook is here: it is not likely, therefore, that anything would be said.

We will never part in spirit: we are

too firmly convinced of what we are ever to fear failure. Let the Christian talk of faith, but I am convinced that the wildest bigot who ever carried fury and fanaticism through a country never could so firmly believe his idol as I believe in you. Be you but false, and I have no more to accomplish: my usefulness is ended.

You talk of religion,—the influence human depravity gained over your mind towards acceding to it. But, for this purpose, the religion of the deist or the worshiper of virtue would suffice, without involving the persecution, battles, bloodshed, which countenancing Christianity countenances. I think, my friend, *we* are the devoutest professors of *true* religion I know,—if the perverted and prostituted name of “religion” is applicable to the idea of devotion to virtue.

“The just man made perfect” I doubt not of: but to this simple truth

where is the necessity of annexing fifty contradictory dogmas, in order that men may destroy each other to know which is right? You see even now I can write against Christianity, "the enormous faith of many made for one."

I write this hasty letter by return of post, because I do not wish to excite the anxiety you name: it is a terrible feeling.

My friend, my dearest friend, adieu. One blessing has Fate given, to counterpoise all the evil she has thrown into my balance; and, when I cease to estimate this blessing—a true, dear friend—may I cease to live!

Your true, sincere, affectionate,

PERCY SHELLEY.

LETTER XVII.

KESWICK,

Nov. 23, 1811—SATURDAY.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

Your letter reached me one day too late, on account of a tempest happening, and delaying the mail. It hath at length reached me ; and dear, sacredly dear, to me is every line of it. I feel as if this occurrence had deprived me of the breath of life which now with such eagerness I inhale. Oh friendship like ours ! its most soul-lulling comforts can, ought, never to be called selfish ; for, although we give each other pleasure, our love is not selfish. Reasoning is necessary to selfishness ; and the delight I feel in bracing my mind with the energies of yours is involuntary. It is the remote

result of reason ; but, in cases of this nature, it is necessary that a pleasure should immediately arise from the cool calculation of degree of benefit resulting to itself, before it can be called selfishness. Your letter has soothed, tranquillized me : it seems as if every bitter disappointment had changed its bitter character.

I could have borne to die, to die eternally, with my once-loved friend. I could coolly have reasoned : to the conclusions of reason I could have unhesitatingly submitted. Earth seemed to be enough for our intercourse : on earth its bounds appeared to be stated, as the event hath dreadfully proved. But with *you*—your friendship seems to have generated a passion to which fifty such fleeting inadequate existences as these appear to be but the drop in the bucket, too trivial for account. With you, I cannot submit to perish like the flower of the field. I cannot

consent that the same shroud which shall moulder around these perishing frames shall enwrap the vital spirit which hath produced, sanctified—may I say, eternized?—a friendship such as ours. Most high and noble feelings are referable to passion: but these—these are referable to reason (certainly “inspiration” hath nothing to do with the latter). I say, passion is referable to reason: but I mean the great aspiring passions of disinterested Friendship, Philanthropy. It is necessary that reason should disinterestedly determine: the passion of the virtuous will then energetically put its decrees in execution.

Your fancy does not run away with your reason; but your too great dependence on mine does. Preserve your individuality; reason for yourself; compare and discuss with me, I will do the same with you: for are you not my second self, the stronger shadow of

that soul whose dictates I have been accustomed to obey?

I have taken a long *solitary* ramble to-day. These gigantic mountains piled on each other, these water-falls, these million-shaped clouds tinted by the varying colours of innumerable rainbows hanging between yourself and a lake as smooth and dark as a plain of polished jet—oh, these are sights attunable to the contemplation! I have been much struck by the grandeur of its imagery. Nature here sports in the awful waywardness of her solitude. The summits of the loftiest of these immense piles of rock seem but to elevate Skiddaw and Helvellyn. Imagination is resistlessly compelled to look back upon the myriad ages whose silent change placed them here; to look back when perhaps this retirement of peace and mountain-simplicity was the pandemonium of druidical imposture, the scene of Roman pollu-

tion, the resting-place of the savage denizen of these solitudes with the wolf.—Still, still further. Strain thy reverted fancy when no rocks, no lakes, no cloud-soaring mountains, were here ; but a vast, populous and licentious city stood in the midst of an immense plain. Myriads flocked towards it. London itself scarcely exceeds it in the variety, the extensiveness of its corruption. Perhaps ere Man had lost reason, and lived an happy, happy race : no tyranny, no priestcraft, no war.—Adieu to the dazzling picture !

I have been thinking of you and of human nature. Your letter has been the partner of my solitude,—or rather I have not been alone, for you have been with me. Ought I to grieve ? I ? and hath not Fate been more than kind to me ? Did I expect her to lavish on me the inexhaustible stores of her munificence ? Yet hath she not done so ? What right have I to

lament, to accuse her of barbarity? Hath she not given *you* to me? Oh how pityful ought all her other boons, how contemptible ought all her injuries, *now* to be considered! and you to share my sorrows! Oh am I not doubly now a wretch to cherish them? I will tear them from my remembrance. I cannot be gay—gaiety is not my nature: I have seen too much ever to be so. Yet I will be happy: and I claim it as a sacred right too that you should share my happiness. I will not be *very long* at this distance from you.

I transcribe a little poem I found this morning. It was written some time ago; but, as it appears to show what I then thought of eternal life, I send it.

TO MARY,

WHO DIED IN THIS OPINION.

Maiden, quench the glare of sorrow

Struggling in thine haggard eye :
Firmness dare to borrow
From the wreck of destiny ;
For the ray morn's bloom revealing
Can never boast so bright an hue
As that which mocks concealing,
And sheds its loveliest light on you.

Yet is the tie departed
Which bound thy lovely soul to bliss?
Has it left thee broken-hearted
In a world so cold as this ?
Yet, though, fainting fair one,
Sorrow's self thy cup has given,
Dream thou'lt meet thy dear one,
Never more to part, in heaven.

Existence would I barter
For a dream so dear as thine,
And smile to die a martyr
On affection's bloodless shrine.

Nor would I change for pleasure
That withered hand and ashy cheek,
If my heart enshrined a treasure
Such as forces thine to break.

Pardon me for thus writing on. I preserve no connexion : I do not hesitate, I do not pause one moment, in writing to you. It seems to me as if some spirit guided my pen.

I feel with you. I *will* stifle all these idle regrets. I will sympathize with you. Write to me your sensations, your feelings. ah, I fear I have monopolized them ! Would that this terrible sensation had not forced me to call them thus into action ! But to share grief is a sacred right of friendship—to share every thought, every idea. Remember, this is a *sacred right*. But why need I remind you of what neither of us is in any danger of forgetting ?

Harriet will write to you : I have

persuaded her. May she not share
(the sunshine of my life? O lovely sym-
pathy! thou art indeed life's sweetest,
only solace! and is not my friend the
shrine of sympathy?

I hear nothing of my temporal
affairs. The D[uke] of N[orfolk] hath
written to me: I have answered his
letter. He is polite enough. In truth,
I do not covet any ducal intercourse
or interference. I suppose this is
inevitable and necessary.

I have not seen Southey: he is not
now at Keswick. Believe that, on his
return, I will not be slow to pay
homage to a *really* great man.

Oh I have much, much to say! Me-
thinks words can scarcely embody ideas:
how wretchedly inadequate are letters!

Adieu, dearest of friends. Never do
I for a moment forget how eternally,
sincerely, I am

Yours,

PERCY S.

ELIZABETH HITCHENER. 105

Your letters are six days in coming.
Perhaps one of those hateful Sundays
has been envious of my solace.

LETTER XVIII.

KESWICK, CUMBERLAND,

Sunday, Nov. 24, 1811.

I ANSWER your letter, my dearest Friend, not by return of post, because the Keswick post comes in at seven and goes out at nine, and we are some distance.

Your letters revive me : they resuscitate my slumbering hopes. The languid flame of life, which before burns feebly, glows at communication with that vivid spark of friendship. "Love" I do not think is so adequate a sign of the idea : its usual signification involves selfish monopoly, the sottish idiotism of frenzy-nourished fools, as once I was. But let that era be blotted from the memory of my shame, when purity, truth, reason, virtue, all sanctify a friendship which

shall endure when the "love" of common souls shall sleep where the shroud moulders around their soulless bodies. —What a rhapsody! But with you I feel half inspired; and *then* feel half ashamed, lest my inspiration, like that of others, result from a little vanity.

I am discouraged. His letters of late appear to me to betray *cunning*, deep cunning. But I may be deceived: oh that I were in all that these five weeks had brought forth! His letters are long; but they never express any conviction or unison. They appear merely calculated to bring about what he calls "intimacy on the same happy terms as formerly." This I have positively forbade the very thought of. I tell him that I am open to reason,—I wish, ardently wish, that he would reason sincerely; but that, were I even convinced that his conduct resulted from *disinterested* love of virtue,

he could not live with us, as I should thereby barter Harriet's happiness for his short-lived pleasure,—since, my friend, if it is true that *such* passions are unconquerable (which I do not believe), how much greater ascendancy will they gain when under the immediate influence of their original excitement!

Love of what? Not love of my wife, for love seeks the happiness of its object, *even* when combined with the common-place infatuation of novels and gay life (oh no! I don't know that). Love of self; aye, as genuine and complete as the most bigoted believer in original sin could desire to defile mankind,—these *fine susceptibilities*, to which casual deformity and advanced age are such wonderful cures and preventatives. But these have nothing to do with real love, with friendship. Suppose *your* frame were wasted by sickness, your brow covered

with wrinkles ; suppose age had bowed your form till it reached the ground, would you not be as lovely as now ? Yet one of *these* beings would pass that intellect, that soul, that sensibility, with as much indifference as I would show to the night-star of a ball-room, the magnet of the apes, asses, geese, its inhabitants. So much for real [? false] and so much for true love. The one perishes with the body whence on earth it never dares to soar ; the other lives with the soul which was the exclusive object of its homage. Oh if this last be but true !

You talk of a future state : "is not this imagination," you ask, "a proof of it ?" To me it appears so : to me everything proves it. But what we earnestly desire we are very much prejudiced in favour of. It seems to me that everything lives again.—What is the Soul ? Look at yonder flower. The blast of the North sweeps it from

the earth ; it withers beneath the breath of the destroyer. Yet that flower hath a soul : for what is soul but that which makes an organized being to be what it is,—without which it would not be so? On this hypothesis, must not that (the soul) without which a flower cannot be a flower exist, when the earthly flower hath perished? Yet where does it exist—in what state of being? Have not flowers also some end which Nature destines their being to answer? Doubtless, it ill becomes us to deny this because we cannot certainly discover it ; since so many analogies seem to favour the probability of this hypothesis. I will say, then, that all Nature is animated ; that microscopic vision, as it hath discovered to us millions of animated beings whose pursuits and passions are as eagerly followed as our own ; so might it, if extended, find that Nature itself was

but a mass of organized animation. Perhaps the animative intellect of all this is in a constant rotation of change: perhaps a future state is no other than a different mode of terrestrial existence to which we have fitted ourselves in *this* mode.

Is there any probability in this supposition? On this plan, *congenial* souls must meet; because, having fitted themselves for nearly the same mode of being, they cannot fail to be *near* each other. Free-will must give energy to this infinite mass of being, and thereby constitute Virtue. If *our* change be in this mortal life, do not fear that we shall be among the grovelling souls of heroes, aristocrats, and commercialists.—Adieu to this.

I have scribbled a great deal: all my feeling, all my ideas as they arise, are thus yours. My dear friend, believe that thou art the cheering beam which gilds this wintry day of life,—

perhaps ere long to be the exhaustless
sun which shall gild my millenniums
of immortality.

Adieu, my dearest friend.

Ever, ever yours,

PERCY S.

LETTER XIX.

KESWICK, CUMBERLAND.

[Tuesday, 26 November, 1811.]

YOUR letters are like angels sent from heaven on missions of peace. They assure me that existence is not valueless; they point out the path which it is paradise to tread. And yet, my dearest friend, I am not satisfied that we should be so far asunder. Methinks letters are but imperfect pictures of the mind. They give the permanent and energetic outline, but a thousand minutiae of varied expressions are omitted in the portraiture. I am therefore sorry that you cannot come *now*. Cannot the sweet little nurslings of liberty come? But I will not press you.

Strange prejudices have these country people! I must relate one very

singular one. The other night I was explaining to Harriet and Eliza the nature of the atmosphere; and, to illustrate my theory, I made some experiments on hydrogen gas, one of its constituent parts. This was in the garden, and the vivid flame was seen at some distance. A few days after, Mr. Dare entered our cottage, and said he had something to say to me. "Why, sir," said he, "I am not satisfied with you. I wish you to leave my house." "Why, sir?" "Because the country talks very strangely of your proceedings. Odd things have been seen at night near your dwelling. I am very ill satisfied with this. Sir, I don't like to talk of it: I wish you to provide yourself elsewhere."—I have, with much difficulty, quieted Mr. D.'s fears. He does not, however, much like us; and I am by no means certain that he will permit us to remain.

Have *you* found a house? I have

your promise : next Midsummer will be my holidays. Heaven ! were I the charioteer of Time, his burning wheels would rapidly attain the goal of my aspirations.

You believe, firmly believe me. How invaluable dear ought *now* to be that credit, when an example so terrible has warned you to be sceptical ! That I believe in you cannot be wonderful, for the first words you spoke to me, the manner, are eternal earnestness of your taintlessness and sincerity. But wherefore do I talk thus, when we know, feel, each other ; when every sentiment is reciprocal ; when congeniality, so often laughed at, both have found proof strong as internal evidence can afford ?

I do not love him now : bear witness for me, thou reciprocity of thought, that I do not ! It is, it is true—too true : what you say is conclusive. It tallies too well with what I have yet to

tell you. Oh I have been fearfully deceived ! It is not the degradation of imposition that I lament ; but that a character moulded, as I imagined, in all the symmetry of virtue, should exhibit the loathsome deformity of vice—that a saviour should change to a destroyer.—But adieu to that now.

I shall not accuse my friend of endeavouring to insinuate the tenets of a religion in one sentence, the foundation, the corner-stone, of which she defies all the powers that exist to make her believe, in the next.

Miss Weeke's marriage induces you to think marriage an evil. *I* think it an evil—an evil of immense and extensive magnitude : but I think a previous reformation in myself—and that a general and a great one—is requisite before it may be remedied. Man is the creature of circumstances ; and these, casual circumstances, custom hath made unto him a second nature.

That which hath no more to do with virtue than the most indifferent actions of our lives hath been exalted into its criterion ; and, from being *considered* so, hath *become* one of its criterions. Marriage is monopolizing, exclusive, jealous. The tie which binds it bears the same relation to "friendship in which excess is lovely" that the body doth to the soul. Everything which relates simply to this clay-formed dungeon is comparatively despicable ; and, in a state of perfectible society, could not be made the subject of either virtue or vice. The most delicious strains of music, viands the most titillating to the palate, wines of the most exquisite flavour, if it be innocent to derive delight from them (supposing such a case), it surely must be as innocent in whosoever company it were derived. A law to compel you to hear this music, in the company of such a particular person, appears to me

parallel to that of marriage. Were there even now such a law as this, were this exclusiveness reckoned the criterion of virtue, it certainly would not be worth the while of rational people to "offend their weak brothers" (as St. Paul says) "by eating meats placed before the idols." It ill would become them to risk the peace of others, however prejudiced, by gaining to themselves what from their souls they hold in contempt.

Am I right? It delights me to discuss and to be sceptical: thus we must arrive at truth—that introducer of virtue and usefulness.

Have you read Godwin's *Enquirer* (1)—his *St. Leon* (2)—his *Political Justice* (3)—his *Caleb Williams* (4)?—1 is very good; 2 is good, very good; 3 is long, sceptical, good; 4 is good. I put them in the order that I would advise you to read them.

I understand you when you say we are free. Liberty is the very soul of

friendship, and from the very soul of liberty art thou my friend ; aye, and such a sense as this can never fade.

“ Earthly those passions of the earth
Which perish where they had their birth,
But Love is indestructible.”

I almost wish that Southey had not made the Glendoveer a male : these detestable distinctions will surely be abolished in a future state of being.

“ The holy flame for ever burneth :
From heaven it came, to heaven returneth.”

Might there not have been a prior state of existence ? might we not have been friends then ? The creation of soul at birth is a thing I do not like. Where we have no premisses, we can therefore draw no conclusions. It *may* be all vanity : but I cannot think so.

I may be in Sussex soon. I do not know where I shall be : but, wherever I am, I shall be with you in spirit and in truth. Do not think I am going to insinuate Christianity, though I think

it is as likely a thing as that *you* should. I annihilate God; you destroy the Devil: and then we make a heaven entirely to our own mind. It must be owned that we are tolerably independent. As to your ghostly director, who told you to put out your sun of common sense in order that he might set up his rushlight, I can scarcely believe that he ever even imagined a "call."

When shall you change your abode? Are you fixed at Hurst for some years? I wish to know, as this will enable me to determine on some place of residence near to yours.

This country is heavenly: I will describe it when I have seen more of it. I wish to stay, too, to see Southey. You may imagine, then, that I was very humble to Mr. Dare: I should think he was tolerably afraid of the devil.

I have heard from Hogg since, often:

his letters give me little hope. He still earnestly desires to live with us. You have brought me into a dilemma, concerning his conduct, from which it is impossible to escape. I do not love him. I have examined his conduct, I hope with cool impartiality; and I grieve to find the conclusion thus unfavourable.

I hope you are indebted (as you call it) to the coolness of my judgment for my opinion of you. I have repeatedly told you what I think of you. I consider you one of those beings who carry happiness, reform, liberty, wherever they go. To me you are as my better genius—the judge of my reasonings, the guide of my actions, the influencer of my usefulness. Great responsibility is the consequence of high powers.

I am, as you must be, a despiser of the mock-modesty of the world, which is accustomed to conceal more defects

than excellencies. I know I am superior to the mob of mankind : but I am inferior to you in everything but the equality of friendship.

But my paper ends. Adieu. I bid adieu to-day to what is to me inexpressibly dear, your society.

Ever yours unalterably,

PERCY S.

Tuesday morning. On what day does this letter reach you ?

Harriet desires me to send her love, and hopes you will answer her letter very soon.

LETTER XX.

[KESWICK.

Monday, 9 December, 1811?]

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I have just found your letters. Three of them were here on our return from Greystoke. What will you think of not hearing from me so long? Not that I have forgotten you. Your letters were indeed a most valuable treasure. I have just finished reading them. I shall answer them to-morrow.

We met several people at the Duke's. One in particular struck me. He was an elderly man, who seemed to know all my concerns; and the expression of his face, whenever I held the arguments, which I do *everywhere*, was such as I shall not readily forget. I shall

have more to tell of him, for we have met him before in these mountains, and his particular look then struck Harriet.

Adieu, my dearest friend. I am compelled to break off in the middle of my letter by the conviction that this *may* be too late. You will hear from me to-morrow.

Yours, ever yours,

PERCY SHELLEY.

LETTER XXI.

KESWICK, CUMBERLAND.

[*Tuesday, 10 December, 1811.*]

YOU received a fleeting letter from me yesterday. An immediate acknowledgement of your letters I judged equal in value to the postage of a blank sheet of paper.

Your letters, my dearest friend, are to me an exhaustless mine of pleasure. Fatigued with aristocratical insipidity, left alone scarce one moment by those senseless monopolizers of time that form the court of a Duke, who would be very well as a man, how delightful to commune with the soul which is undisguised—whose importance no arts are necessary nor adequate to exalt !

I admire your father, but I do not think him capable of sympathizing with you. I, you know, consider mind

to be the creature of education : that, in proportion to the characters thereon impressed by circumstance or intention, so does it assume the appearances which vary with these varying events.

Divest every event of its improper tendency, and evil becomes annihilate. Thus, then, I am led to love a being, not because it stands in the physical relation of blood to me, but because I discern an intellectual relationship. It is because chance hath placed us in a situation most fit for rendering happiness to our relations that, if higher considerations intervene not, makes it our duty to devote ourselves to this object. This is your duty, and nobly do you fulfil it. Your father, I plainly see, has some mistakes. Cannot you reason him out of that rough exterior? It has the semblance of sincerity : in reality is it not deceit? Your attention to his happiness is at once so noble, so delicate, so desirous of accomplishing

its design, that how could he fail, if he knew it, to give you that esteem and respect, besides the love which he does? Methinks he is not your equal—that I have not found you equalled. Were he so, would he not discern your attentions? No : he must be like you, before I can ever institute a comparison between your characters.

Of your mother I have not much opinion. She appears to me one of those every-day characters by whom the stock of prejudice is augmented rather than decreased.

Obedience (were society as I could wish it) is a word which ought to be without meaning. If virtue depended on duty, then would prudence be virtue, and imprudence vice ; and the only difference between the Marquis Wellesley and William Godwin would be that the latter had more cunningly devised the means of his own benefit. This cannot be. Prudence is only an

auxiliary of virtue, by which it may become useful. Virtue consists in the motive. Paley's *Moral Philosophy* begins: "Why am I *obliged* to keep my word? Because I desire heaven, and hate hell." Obligation and duty, therefore, are words of no value as the criterion of excellence.—So much for obedience—parents and children. Do you agree to my definition of Virtue—"Disinterestedness?"—Why do I enquire?

I am as little inclined as you are to quarrel with Taffy: I am as much obliged to him for the complex idea, Tyranny. You do understand Locke. This is one of his "complex ideas." The ideas of power, evil, pain, together with a very clear perception of the two latter which may almost define the idea "hatred," together with other minor ideas, enter into its composition.

What you say about residing near you is true. We cannot either get a

house there immediately. At mid-summer, perhaps before, we see you here: that is certain. Oh how you will delight in this scenery! These mountains are now capped with snow. The lake, as I see it hence, is glassy and calm. Snow-vapours, tinted by the loveliest colours of refraction, pass far below the summits of these giant rocks. The scene, even in a winter sunset, is inexpressibly lovely. The clouds assume shapes which seem peculiar to these regions. What will it be in summer? What when *you* are here? Oh give me a little cottage in *that* scene! Let all live in peaceful little houses—let temples and palaces rot with their perishing masters! Be society civilized; be you with us; grant eternal life to all; and I will ask not the paradise of religionists! I think the Christian heaven (with its hell) would be to *us* no paradise: but such a scene as this!

How my pen runs away with me!—We design, after your visit (which Heaven knows, I wish would *never* end), to visit Ireland. We are very near Port-Patrick. If you could extend your time, could *you* not accompany us? But am I not building on a foundation more flimsy than air? Can I look back to the last year, and decide with certainty on anything but the eternity of my regard for *you*?

Every day augments the strength of my friendship for you, dearest friend. Every day makes me feel more keenly that our being is eternal. Every day brings the conviction how futile, how inadequate, are all reasonings to demonstrate it? Yet are we—are these souls which measure in their circumscribed domain the distance of yon orbs—are we but bubbles which arise from the filth of a stagnant pool, merely to be again re-absorbed into the mass of its corruption? I think not: I feel

not. Can you prove it? Yet the eternity of man has ever been believed. It is not merely one of the dogmas of an inconsistent religion, though all religions have taken it for their foundation. The wild American, who never heard of Christ, or dreamed of original sin, whose "Great Spirit" was nothing but the Soul of Nature, could not reconcile his feelings to annihilation. He too has his paradise. And in truth is not the Iroquois's "human life perfected" better than to "circle with harps the golden throne" of one who dooms half of his creatures to eternal destruction? —Thus much for the Soul.

I have now, my dear friend, in contemplation a poem. I intend it to be by anticipation a picture of the manners, simplicity, and delights of a perfect state of society, though still earthly. Will you assist me? I only thought of it last night. I design to accomplish it, and publish. After, I shall draw a

picture of Heaven. I can do neither without some hints from you. The latter I think you ought to *make*.

I told you of a strange man I met the other day: I am going to see him. I shall also see Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, there. I shall then give you a picture of them.

I owe you several letters, nor shall I be slack to pay you. I even now have much—oh, much!—to say. But never can I express the abundance of pleasure which your three letters have given me. Surely, my dearest friend, you must have known by intuition all my thoughts to write me as you have done.

Give my love to Anne: what does she think of me? You delight me by what you tell me of her. Every prejudice conquered, every error rooted out, every virtue given, is so much gained in the cause of reform. I am never unmindful of this: I see that you are not. Tell Anne that if she would

write to me, I would answer her letters.

Now, my dearest friend, adieu. This paper is at an end, but what I have to say is not. I owe you several letters, and shall not fail in the payment.

What think you of my undertaking? Shall I not get into prison? Harriet is sadly afraid that his Majesty will provide me with a lodging, in consideration of the zeal which I evince for the bettering of his subjects.

I think I shall also make a selection of my younger poems for publication. You will give me credit for their morality.

Well, adieu, my dearest friend—thou to whom every thought, every shade of thought, is owing, since last I wrote. Adieu.

Your sincerest,

PERCY S.

Harriet sends her love to you: the dear girl will write to you.

LETTER XXII.

KESWICK, [CUMBERLAND.]

Sunday, December 15 [1811].

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

You will before now have my last letter. I have felt the distrustful recurrences of the post-office, which *you* felt when no answer to all your letters came. I have regretted that visit to Greystoke, because this delay must have given you uneasiness.

I have since heard from Captain P. His letter contains the account of a meditated proposal, on the part of my father and grandfather, to make my income immediately larger than the former's, in case I will consent to entail the estate on my eldest son, and, in default of issue, on my brother. Silly dotards! do they think I can be thus bribed and ground into an act of such

contemptible injustice and inutility? that I will forswear my principles in consideration of £2000 a year? that the good-will I could thus purchase, or the ill-will I could thus overbear, would recompense me for the loss of self-esteem, of conscious rectitude? And with what face can they make to me a proposal so insultingly hateful? Dare one of them propose such a condition to my face—to the face of any virtuous man—and not sink into nothing at his disdain? That I should entail £120,000 of command over labour, of power to remit this, to employ it for beneficent purposes, on one whom I know not—who might, instead of being the benefactor of mankind, be its bane, or use this for the worst purposes, which the real delegates of my chance-given property might convert into a most useful instrument of benevolence! — No! this *you* will not suspect me of.

What I have told you will serve to put in its genuine light the grandeur of aristocratical distinctions ; and to show that contemptible vanity will gratify its unnatural passion at the expense of every just, humane, and philanthropic consideration,—

“ Though to a radiant angel linked
Will sate itself in a celestial bed,
And prey on garbage.”

I have written this to you just as I have received the Captain's letter. My indignant contempt has probably confused my language, and rendered my writing rather illegible. But it is my custom to communicate to you, my dearest friend,—to that brain of sympathetic sensibility—every idea as it comes, as I do to my own.

Hogg at length has declared himself to be one of those mad votaries of selfishness who are cool to destroy the

peace of others, and revengeful, when their schemes are foiled, even to idiotism. In answer to a letter in which I strongly insisted on the criminality of exposing himself to the inroads of a passion which he had proved himself unequal to control, and endangering Harriet's happiness, he has talked of my "consistency in despising religion, despising duelling, and despising sincere friendship"—with some hints as to duelling, to induce me to meet him in that manner. I have answered his letter; in which I have said I shall not fight a duel with him, whatever he may say or do; that I have no right either to expose my own life, or take his—in addition to the wish I have, from various motives, to prolong my existence. Nor do I think that his life is a fair exchange for mine; since I have acted up to my principles, and he has denied his, and acted inconsistently with any morality whatsoever. That,

if he would show how I had wronged him, I would repair it to the uttermost mite; but I would not fight a duel.

Now, dearest partner of that friendship which once *he* shared, now I am at peace. He is incapable of being other but the every-day villain who parades St. James's Street; though even as a villain will he be eminent and imposing. The chances are now much against *my* ever influencing him to adopt habits of benevolence and philanthropy. This passion of animal love which has seized him, this which the false refinements of society have exalted into an idol to which its misguided members burn incense, has intoxicated him, and rendered him incapable of being influenced by any but the consideration of self-love. How much worthier of a rational being is friendship! which, though it wants none of the "impassionateness" which

some have characterized as the inseparable of the other, yet retains judgment, which is not blind though it may chance to see something like perfection in its object, which retains its sensibility, but whose sensibility is celestial and intellectual, unallied to the grovelling passions of the earth.

Southey has changed. I shall see him soon, and I shall reproach him for his tergiversation. He, to whom bigotry, tyranny, law were hateful, has become the votary of these idols in a form the most disgusting. The Church of England—its Hell and all—has become the subject of his panegyric. The war in Spain, that prodigal waste of human blood to aggrandize the fame of statesmen, is his delight. The constitution of England—with its Wellesley, its Paget, and its Prince—is inflated with the prostituted exertions of his pen. I feel a sickening distrust when I see all

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that I had considered good, great, or imitable, fall around me into the gulf of error. But *we* will struggle on its brink to the last ; and, if compelled we fall, we shall have at all events the consolation of knowing that we *have* struggled with a nature that is bad, and that this nature—not the imbecility of our proper cowardice—has involved us in the ignominy of defeat.

Wordsworth, a *quondam* associate of Southey, yet retains the integrity of his independence ; but his poverty is such that he is frequently obliged to beg for a shirt to his back.

Well, dearest friend, adieu. Changes happen, friends fall around us : what once *was* great sinks into the imbecility of human grandeur. Empires shall fade, kings shall be peasants, and peasants shall be kings : but never will *we* cease to regard each other, because we never will cease to deserve it.

ELIZABETH HITCHENER. 141

My Harriet desires her love to you.

Yours most *imperishably*, and eternally,

P. B. SHELLEY.

I shall write again. Do these letters come as a single sheet?

LETTER XXIII.

KESWICK, [CUMBERLAND,

Thursday,] December 26, 1811.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I have delayed writing for two days, that my letters might not succeed each other so closely as one day. I have also been engaged in talking with Southey. You may conjecture that a man must possess high and estimable qualities if, with the prejudices of such total difference from my sentiments, I can regard him great and worthy. In fact, Southey is an advocate of liberty and equality. He looks forward to a state when all shall be perfected, and matter become subjected to the omnipotence of mind. But he is now an advocate for existing establishments. He says he designs his three statues in

Kehama to be contemplated with republican feelings, but not in this age. Southey hates the Irish: he speaks against Catholic Emancipation, and Parliamentary Reform. In these things we differ, and our differences were the subject of a long conversation. Southey calls himself a Christian; but he does not believe that the Evangelists were inspired; he rejects the Trinity, and thinks that Jesus Christ stood precisely in the same relation to God as himself. Yet he calls himself a Christian. Now, if ever there were a definition of a Deist, I think it could never be clearer than this confession of faith. But Southey, though far from being a man of great reasoning powers, is a great man. He has all that characterizes the poet,—great eloquence, though obstinacy in opinion, which arguments are the last thing that can shake. He is a man of virtue. He will never believe what he thinks; his professions are in

strict compatibility with his practice.—
More of him another time.

With Calvert, the man whom I mentioned to you in that pygmy letter, we have now become acquainted. He knows everything that relates to my family and myself : my expulsion from Oxford, the opinions that caused it, are no secrets to him. We first met Southey at his house. He has been very kind to us. The rent of our cottage was two guineas and a half a week, with linen provided : he has made the proprietor lower it to one guinea, and has lent us linen himself. We are likely therefore to continue where we are, as we have engaged, on these terms, for three months. After that, we will augment his rent.

Believe me, my most valued friend, that I am, no less than yourself, an admirer of sincerity and openness. Mystery is hateful and foreign to all my habits : I wish to have no reserves.

Were the world composed of such individuals as that which shares my soul, it should be the keeper of my conscience. But I do not know whether, in the first place, the circumstance of Hogg's apostacy is such as would in any wise contribute to benefit by its publication; and, *not* knowing this, should I not be highly criminal to risk anything by its disclosure? Though I have much respect and love for my uncle and aunt, and indeed can never be sufficiently thankful for their unlimited kindness, yet I know that no good end, save explicitness, is to be answered by this explanation; and my uncle's indignation would be so great that I have frequently pictured to myself the possibility of [its] outstepping the limits of justice. My aunt, too, would be voluble in resentment; and I am conscious that she suspected, long before its event, the occurrence of this terrible disappointment.

To you I tell everything that passes in my soul, even the secret thoughts sacred alone to sympathy. But you are my *dearest* friend ; and, so long as the present system of things continues (which I fear is not yet verging to its demolition), so long must some distinction be established between those for whom you have a great esteem, a high regard, and those who are to you what Eliza Hitchener is to me.

Since I have answered Hogg's letter, I have received another. It was not written until after the receipt of my answer. Its strain is humble and compliant : he talks of his quick passions, his high sense of honour. I have not answered it, nor shall I. He has too deeply plunged into hypocrisy for *my* arguments to effect any change. I leave him to his fate. Would that I could have reached him ! It is an unavailing wish—the last one that I shall breathe over departed excellence.

How I have loved him *you* can feel.
But he is no longer the being whom
perhaps 'twas the warmth of my ima-
gination that pictured. I love no
longer what is not that which I loved.

Do not praise me so much: my
counsellor will overturn the fabric she
is erecting. You strengthen me in
virtue: but weaken not the energy of
your example by proposing your so
high esteem as a reward for acting well.
I know none, of my principles, who
would do otherwise.

This proposal will be (if made) a
proof of the imbecility of aristocracy.
I have been led into reasonings which
make me hate more and more the
existing establishment, of every kind.
I gasp when I think of plate and balls
and titles and kings. I have beheld
scenes of misery. The manufacturers
are reduced to starvation. My friends
the military are gone to Nottingham.
Curses light on them for their motives,

if they destroy one of its famine-wasted inhabitants! But, if I were a friend to the destroyed, myself about to perish, I fancy that I could bless them for saving my friend the bitter mockery of a trial. Southey thinks that a revolution is *inevitable*: this is one of his reasons for supporting things as they are. But let *us* not belie our principles. They may feed and may riot and may sin to the last moment. The groans of the wretched may pass unheeded till the latest moment of this infamous revelry, —till the storm burst upon them, and the oppressed take ruinous vengeance on the oppressors.

I do not proceed with my poem: the subject is not now to my mind. I am composing some essays which I design to publish in the summer. The minor poems I mentioned you will see soon: they are about to be sent to the printers. I think it wrong to publish anything anonymously, and shall annex

my name, and a preface in which I shall lay open my intentions, as the poems are not wholly useless.

"I sing, and Liberty may love the song."

Can you assist my graver labours?

Harriet complains that I hurt my health, and fancies that I shall get into prison. The dear girl sends her love to you: she is quite what is called "in love" with you.

What do you advise me about Hogg and my uncle? If you think best, I will tell him. Do you be my mentor, my guide, my counsellor, the half of my soul: I demand it.

I never heard of Parkinson. I have not room to say anything of Xenophanes. I shall send for the *Organic Remains*, &c. You will like the *Political Justice*: for its politics you are prepared. I hope you have got the *first* edition. The chapters on Truth and sincerity are impressively true.— But I anticipate your opinions.

I have neglected ten thousand things
—in my next.

I *will* live beyond this life.

Yours, yours most imperishably,

PERCY S.

If they charge you a double sheet
show this,* or open it before them, and
they will retract.

* Marked outside: "This is *only* a large
single sheet."

LETTER XXIV.

KESWICK, [CUMBERLAND,
Thursday,] Jan. 2, 1812.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

YOUR immense sheet, and the voluminousness of your writing, and my pleasure, demand an equivalent. I can give it at length : but do not flatter me so much as to suppose that I can equal you in interest. Your style may not be so polished ; sometimes I think it is not so legal as mine : but words are only signs of ideas, and their arrangement only valuable as it is adapted adequately to express them. Your eloquence comes from the soul : it has the impassionateness of nature. I sometimes doubt the source of mine, and suspect the genuineness of my sincerity. But I do not think I have any reason : no, I am firm, secure, un-

changeable.—Pardon this scepticism ; but I will incorporate, for the inspection of my second conscience, each shadow, however fleeting, each idea which worth or chance imprints on my recollection.

You have loved God, but not the God of Christianity. A God of pardons and revenge, a God whose will could change the order of the universe, seems never to have been the object of your affections. I have lately had some conversation with Southey which has elicited my true opinions of God. He says I ought not to call myself an atheist, since in reality I believe that the Universe is God. I tell him I believe that "God" is another signification for "the Universe." I then explain :—I think reason and analogy seem to countenance the opinion that life is infinite ; that, as the soul which now animates this frame was once the vivifying principle of the infinitely

lowest link in the chain of existence, so is it ultimately destined to attain the highest; that everything is animation (as explained in my last letter); and in consequence, being infinite, we can never arrive at its termination. How, on this hypothesis, are we to arrive at a First Cause?—Southey admits and believes this. Can he be a Christian? Can God be three? Southey agrees in my idea of Deity,—the mass of infinite intelligence. I, you, and he, are constituent parts of this immeasurable whole. What is now to be thought of Jesus Christ's divinity? To me it appears clear as day that it is the falsehood of human-kind.

You seem much to doubt Christianity. I do not: I cannot conceive in my mind even the possibility of its genuineness. I am far from thinking you weak and imbecile: you must know this. I look up to you as a mighty mind. I anticipate the era of reform

with the more eagerness as I picture to myself *you* the barrier between violence and renovation. Assert your true character, and believe one who loves you for what you are to be sincere. Knowing you to be thus great, I should grieve that you countenanced imposture. Love God, if thou wilt (I do not think you ever feared Him), but recollect what God is.

If what I have urged against Christianity is insufficient, read its very books, that a nearer inspection may contribute to the rectifying any false judgment. Physical considerations must not be disregarded, when physical improbabilities are asserted by the witnesses of a contested question. Bearing in mind that disinterestedness is the essence of virtuous motive, any dogmas militating with this principle are to be rejected. Considering that belief is not a voluntary operation of the mind, any system which makes it a subject of reward or

punishment cannot be supposed to emanate from one who has a master-knowledge of the human mind. All investigations of the era of the world's existence are incongruous with that of Moses. Whether is it probable that Moses or Sir Isaac Newton, knew astronomy best? Besides, Moses writes the history of his own death; which is almost as extraordinary a thing to do as to describe the creation of the world. Thus much for Christianity. This only relates to the truth of it: do not forget the weightier consideration of its direct effects.

Southey is no believer in original sin: he thinks that which appears to be a taint of our nature is in effect the result of unnatural political institutions. — There we agree. He thinks the prejudices of education, and sinister influences of political institutions, adequate to account for all the specimens of vice which have fallen within his observation.

You talk of Montgomery. We all sympathise with him, and often think and converse of him. I am going to write to him to-day. His story is a terrible one: it is briefly this.— His father and mother were Moravian missionaries. They left their country to convert the Indians: they were young, enthusiastic, and excellent. The Indians savagely murdered them. Montgomery was then quite a child; but the impression of this event never wore away. When he grew up, he became a disbeliever of Christianity, having very much such principles as a virtuous enquirer for truth. In the mean time he loved an apparently amiable female: he was about to marry her. Having some affairs in the West Indies, he went to settle them before his marriage. On his return to Sheffield, he actually met the marriage-procession of this woman, who had in the mean time chosen another love. He became

melancholy-mad : the horrible events of his life preyed on his mind. He was shocked at having forsaken a faith for which a father and mother whom he loved had suffered martyrdom. The contest between his reason and his faith was destroying. He is now a Methodist. Will not this tale account for the melancholy and religious cast of his poetry?— This is what Southey told me, word for word.

"POET'S EPITAPH.

"Art thou a Statesman, in the van
Of public business born and bred?
First learn to love one living man;
Then mayest thou think upon the
dead.

"Art thou a lawyer? Come not nigh :
Go, carry to some other place
The hardness of thy coward eye,
The falsehood of thy sallow face.

" Art thou a man of rosy cheer,
A purple man right plump to see?
Approach : but, Doctor, not too near !
This grave no cushion is for thee.

" Physician art thou—one all eyes—
Philosopher—a fingering slave—
One who would peep and botanize
Upon his mother's grave?

" Wrapped closely in thy sensual fleece,
Pass quickly on : and take, I pray,
That he below may rest in peace,
Thy pin-point of a soul away.

• • • •

" But who is he, with modest looks,
And clad in homely russet—brown,
Who murmurs near the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own?

" And you must love him, ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.

"All outward shows of sky and earth,
Of sea and valley, he hath viewed ;
And impulses of deeper birth
Have come to him in solitude."

I have transcribed a piece of Wordsworth's poetry. It may give you some idea of the man. How expressively keen are the first stanzas ! I shall see this man soon.

I wish I knew your mother : I do not mean your natural, but your moral, mother. I have many thanks to give to her. I owe her much : more than I can hope to repay, yet not without the reach of an attempt at remuneration.

I look forward to the time when you will *live* with us : I think you ought at some time. If *then* principle still directs you to take scholars, this will be no impediment : but I think you might be far more usefully employed. Your pen—so overflowing, so demon-

strative, so impassioned—ought to trace characters for a nation's perusal, and not make grammar-books for children. This latter is undoubtedly a most useful employment: but who would consent that *such* powers should always be so employed? This is, however, a subject for afterwards.

My Poems will make their appearance as soon as I can find a printer. As to *the* poem, I have for the present postponed its execution; thinking that, if I can finish my Essays, and a Tale in which I design to exhibit the cause of the failure of the French Revolution, and the state of morals and opinions in France during the latter years of its monarchy.* Some of the leading passions of the human mind will of course have a place in its fabric. I design to exclude the sexual passion; and think the keenest satire on its intemperance will be complete silence on the subject.

* Shelley has left this sentence uncompleted.

I have already done about 200 pages of this work, and about 150 of the Essays.

Now, you can assist me, and you *do* assist me. I must censure my friend's inadequate opinion of herself; for truly inadequate must it be if it inequalizes our intellectual powers. Have confidence in yourself: dare to believe "I am great."

I fear you cannot read my crossed writing: indeed, I very much doubt whether the whole of my scribbling be not nearly illegible.

Adieu, my dearest friend. Harriet sends her love.

Eliza, her sister, is a very amiable girl. Her opinions are gradually rectifying; and, although I have never spoken of her to you before, it is injustice to her to conceal [her] from you so long.

I have said nothing of Godwin—nothing of a thousand topics I had to write on. But I admire Godwin as

much as you can. I shall write to him too to-day or to-morrow. I do not suppose that he will answer my address. I shall, however, call on him whenever I go to London.

I am not sure that Southey is *quite* uninfluenced by venality. He is disinterested, so far as respects his family ; but I question if he is so, as far as respects the world. His writings solely support a numerous family. His sweet children are such amiable creatures that I almost forgive what I suspect. His wife is very stupid: Mrs. Coleridge is worse. Mrs. Lovel, who was once an actress, is the best of them.

Adieu, my friend and fellow-labourer; and never think that I can be otherwise than devoted to you till annihilation.

Yours for ever,

P. B. SHELLEY.

Southey says I am not an Atheist, but a Pantheist.

LETTER XXV.

KESWICK, CUMBERLAND.

[*Tuesday*], Jan. 7, 1812.

I HAVE delayed writing to you for two days : I wronged myself more than you. I have been partly unwilling to break in on some writings I am engaged in ; partly in depression. Believe me with what pleasure I return to you.

My dearest friend. I have thought of you, and this moment am resolved no longer to think *with* you. Do not fear : I shall not be prisoned. I am yet but a viper in the egg, they say : I have all the venom, but I cannot sting.

Besides, they shall not get at me : they cannot. I shall refer to Blackstone : he will tell me what points are criminal, and what innocent, in the eye of the law. I do not therefore anticipate a prison : I need not tell you I do not fear it.—But yes, I do. It would curtail much of our Harriet's happiness ; it would excite too vividly your sympathy, and might obviate my performance of many acts of usefulness which, if I have liberty, I can effect. Godwin yet lives : if Government, at one time, could have destroyed any man, Godwin would have ceased to be. Thomas Paine died a natural death : his writings were far more violently in opposition to Government than mine perhaps ever will be. I desire to establish on a lasting basis the happiness of human-kind. Popular insurrections and revolutions I look upon with discountenance. *If such things must be*, I will take the side of the people ; but my reasonings shall

endeavour to ward it from the hearts of the rulers of the earth, deeply as I detest them. How does Sir Thomas Burdett continue to live? Certainly, if Mr. Percival could have killed him, I do believe he indubitably would have done so. No, my dearest friend, fear not that I shall be destroyed. They cannot, they dare not: I do not dispute that they would if they could.

Miss Adams—I cannot pardon her for racking you with these fears: friend of my soul, cast them off. A beam of the house *may* destroy *you*: but I live in hopes that it will not. I feel assured that you are at Hurst in safety. If I did not think so, I could defy the Bishops themselves to paint a hell so red where I would not go to meet you.

Harriet has written to you to-day. She has informed you of our plans. In a month I shall have completed a tale illustrative of the causes of the failure of the French Revolution to benefit

mankind. At the conclusion of that month we think of going to Dublin, where I shall print it; in May, to receive your visit in Wales—fifty miles nearer than Cumberland.

In fact, my friend, at this Keswick, though the face of the country is lovely, the *people* are detestable. The manufacturers, with their contamination, have crept into the peaceful vale, and deformed the loveliness of Nature with human taint. The debauched servants of the great families who resort contribute to the total extinction of morality. Keswick seems more like a suburb of London than a village of Cumberland. Children are frequently found in the river, which the unfortunate women employed in the manufactory destroy. Wales is very different, and there you shall visit us. The distance is somewhat shorter, the scenery quite as beautiful.

Southey says Expediency ought to

[be] made the ground of politics, but not of morals. I urged that the most fatal error that ever happened in the world was the separation of political and ethical science; that the former ought to be entirely regulated by the latter, as whatever was a right criterion of action for an individual must be so for a society, which was but an assemblage of individuals; "that politics were morals comprehensively enforced." Southey did not think the reasoning conclusive. He has a very happy knack, when truth goes against him, of saying: "Oh! when you are as old as I am, you will think with me." This talent he employed in the above instance. If a thing exists, there can always be shown reasons for its existence. If there cannot, it still *may* exist, but can never be the subject of mortal faith.

You will see in my *Hubert Cauvin* (the name of the tale) that I have spoken of expediency, insincerity,

mystery; adherence to which I do not consider the remotest occasion of violence and blood in the French Revolution. Indeed, their fatal effects are to be traced in every one instance of human life where vice and misery enter into the features of the portraiture.

I do not think so highly of Southey as I did. It is to be confessed that, to see him in his family, to behold him in his domestic circle, he appears in a most amiable light. I do not mean that he is or can be the great character which once I linked him to: his mind is terribly narrow, compared to it. *Once* he was this character,—everything you can conceive of practised virtue. Now he is corrupted by the world, contaminated by Custom: it rends my heart when I think what he might have been! Wordsworth and Coleridge I have yet to see.

I now send you some poetry: the

subject is not fictitious. It is the over-
flowings of the mind this morning.

MOTHER AND SON.

I.

SHE was an aged woman ; and the years
Which she had numbered on her
toilsome way

Had bowed her natural powers to
decay.

She was an aged woman ; yet the ray
Which faintly glimmered through her
starting tears,

Pressed into light by silent misery,
Hath soul's imperishable energy.

She was a cripple, and incapable
To add one mite to gold-fed luxury :

And therefore did her spirit dimly
feel

That poverty, the crime of tainting
stain,

Would merge her in its depths, never to
rise again.

II.

One only son's love had supported her.
She long had struggled with infirmity,
Lingering to human life-scenes ; for
to die,

When fate has spared to rend some
mental tie,
Would many wish, and surely fewer dare.
But, when the tyrant's bloodhounds
forced the child

For his curst power unhallowed arms to
wield—

Bend to another's will—become a
thing
More senseless than the sword of
battlefield—

Then did she feel keen sorrow's
keenest sting ;
And many years had passed ere comfort
they would bring.

III.

For seven years did this poor woman
live

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In unparticipated solitude.
Thou mightst have seen her in the
forest rude
Picking the scattered remnants of its
wood.
If human, thou mightst then have
learned to feel.
The gleanings of precarious charity
Her scantiness of food did scarce supply.
The proofs of an unspeaking sorrow
dwelt
Within her ghastly hollowness of eye :
Each arrow of the season's change
she felt.
Yet still she groans, ere yet her race
were run,
One only hope : it was — once more to
see her son.

IV.

It was an eve of June, when every star
Spoke peace from heaven.—
She rested on the moor. 'Twas such
an eve

When first her soul began indeed to
grieve :

Then he was there ; now he is very far.
The sweetness of the balmy evening
A sorrow o'er her aged soul did fling,
Yet not devoid of rapture's mingled
tear :

A balm was in the poison of the sting.
The aged sufferer for many a year
Had never felt such comfort. She
suppressed
A sigh—and, turning round, clasped
William to her breast !

V.

And, though his form was wasted by
the woe
Which tyrants on their victims love
to wreak,
Though his sunk eyeballs and his
faded cheek
Of slavery's violence and scorn
did speak,
Yet did the aged woman's bosom glow.
The vital fire seemed reillumed within

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By this sweet unexpected welcoming.
Oh consummation of the fondest
hope
That ever soared on fancy's wildest
wing !
O tenderness that found'st so sweet a
scope !
Prince who dost pride thee on thy
mighty sway,
When *thou* canst feel such love, thou
shalt be great as they !

VI.

Her son, compelled, the country's foes
had fought,
Had bled in battle ; and the stern
control
Which ruled his sinews and coerced
his soul
Utterly poisoned life's unmingled
bowl,
And unsubduable evils on him brought.
He was the shadow of the lusty child
Who, when the time of summer season
smiled,

Did earn for her a meal of honesty,
 And with affectionate discourse beguiled
 The keen attacks of pain and
 poverty ;
 Till Power, as envying her this only joy,
 From her maternal bosom tore the
 unhappy boy.

VII.

And now cold charity's unwelcome dole
 Was insufficient to support the pair ;
 And they would perish rather than
 would bear
 The law's stern slavery, and the
 insolent stare
 With which law loves to rend the poor
 man's soul—
 The bitter scorn, the spirit-sinking noise
 Of heartless mirth which women, men,
 and boys,
 Wake in this scene of legal misery.

.

The facts are real : that recorded in
 the last fragment of a stanza is literally

true. The poor man said : "None of my family ever came *to parish*, and I would starve first. I am a poor man ; but I could never hold my head up after that."

Adieu, my dearest friend. Think of the poetry which I have inserted as a picture of my feelings, not a specimen of my art. I shall write to you soon again. Your letters give me perpetual food for thought and discussion. Southey has got off more hardly than he otherwise would have done, in consequence of them. Not that I *ever* will abet expediency, either in morals or politics. I never will do ill that good may come, —at least, so far.

Adieu. Harriet desires her love.
My dearest friend, adieu.

Your *eternal*

PERCY B. S.

I find you begin to doubt the eternity of the soul : I do not.—More of that hereafter.

LETTER XXVI.

[KESWICK, CUMBERLAND,

Monday, 20 January, 1812.]

✓ IT IS now a whole week since I have addressed my friend, my dearest friend, the partner of my thoughts. But the thought of you has enlivened and animated my intermediate employments; has added pleasure to the pleasure which I have received; and has contributed, with my dear Harriet's love, to disarm a terrible headache which I have had. I have been obliged, by an accession of nervous attack, to take a quantity of laudanum, which I did very unwillingly and reluctantly, and which I should not have done, had I been alone. I am now quite recovered. When the mind is at ease, illness does not continue long.

I have something to tell you. Godwin has answered my letters, and he is now my *friend*. He shall be yours : share with me this acquisition, more valuable than the gifts of princes. His letters are like his writings, the mirror of a firm and elevated mind. They are the result of the experience of ages, which he condenses for my instruction. It is with awe and veneration that I read the letters of this veteran in persecution and independence. He remains unchanged. I have no soul-chilling alteration to record of his character: the unmoderated enthusiasm of humanity still characterizes him. He preserves those principles of extensive and independent action which alone can give energy and vigour. Like Southey he does not change. The age of the body has [not] induced the age of the soul: though his shell is mouldering, the spirit within seems in no wise to participate in the decay. I

have unfolded to him the leading traits of my character, and the leading events of my life. I have certainly won his good opinion. He says : "At present I feel for you all those motives of interest that can be crowded into the case of a young man I never saw. First, you appear to be in some degree the pupil of my writings ; and I feel so far as if I were in a measure responsible for your conduct. Secondly, from your account of what you have done (though nothing you have written has fallen in my way), I cannot but conclude that you possess extraordinary powers. Thirdly, as a man of family born to a considerable fortune, it is of the more importance how you conduct yourself ; for money is one of the means a man may possess of being extremely useful to his species."

But you shall see his letters ; *perhaps* shall see himself. Oh if he would come to Wales, and meet you ! I think he

is old : but age, with Godwin, must be but the perfecting of his abilities ; but the fruit of that blossom that unfolded itself so beautifully in adolescence.— Adieu to Godwin.

Now to Southey. He has lost my good opinion. No private virtues can compensate for public language like this. The following passage is Southey's writing: the *Ed[inburgh] An[nual] Register*. "We are not displeased at the *patriotic* expedient to which *the worthy Sir Francis*" (italics in original) "has thus recourse ; as it seems to show how contemptible are the Burdettite and Wardleite members, whose nature is debased by the vile views of faction, and whose unmanly feelings and ungenerous hearts forbid their sympathy in a case which—to the everlasting honour of the country be it related—so deeply interests" (speaking of Spain) "with keen solicitude the fond bosoms of a people"—(now mark this dis-

gusting abominable flattery, and horrible lie—I can't contain myself)—“who, in duly appreciating his transcendent virtues, prove themselves deserving the best monarch that ever adorned a throne.”—Now what think you of this? I can only exclaim with Bolingbroke, “Poor human nature!”

We have now serious thoughts of immediately going to Ireland. Southey's conversation has lost its charm; except it be the charm of horror at so hateful a prostitution of talents. I hasten to go to Ireland. I am now writing an *Address* to the poor Irish Catholics. Part of it will be in the following strain. —“Think of your children, and your children's children; and take great care (for it all rests with you) that, whilst one tyranny is destroyed, another, more fierce and terrible, does not spring up. Take care of smooth-faced men who talk indeed of freedom, but who will cheat

you into slavery. Can there be worse slavery than depending for the safety of your souls on another man? Is one man more favoured than another by God? No: if God makes any distinction, they are favoured according to the good they do, not according to the rank or profession they hold. God loves a poor man as well as a priest (Jesus Christ has said as much), he has given him a soul as much to himself. The worship that a good being must love is that of a simple affectionate heart that shows its purity in good doings, and not in ceremonies, confessions, masses, burials, wonders, and processions. Take care that you are not led away by these things. Doubt everything that leads you not to love and charity with all men; and think of the word 'Heretic' as of a word invented by some selfish knave for the ruin and misery of the world, to answer his own paltry and narrow

ambition."—You shall see the pamphlet when it comes out: it will be cheaply printed, and printed in large sheets to be stuck about the walls of Dublin. I am eager and earnest to be there, and that you were with me.

My true and dear friend, why should we be separated? When may we unite? What might we not do, if together! If two hearts, panting for the happiness and liberty of mankind, were joined by union and proximity, as they are by friendship and sympathy. How Harriet and her sister long to see you! and how *I* long to see you, never to part with you again! How I could tell to you a thousand feelings and thoughts to which letters are inadequate! how plans, that now die away unformed, might then be elicited and modified! We might write, and talk, and hypothesize, theorize, and reason! Oh let the time come! It may and will

neither be to-day nor to-morrow, nor this month nor next: but *write* of it in your next, I entreat you. The ties that bind you to Hurst are not eternal; and it will be worth while to consider, since you are destined to move in an eccentric and *comprehensive* orbit, how far your duties at H. are compatible with these, or how far they are to be neglected if a wider field is exhibited.

Have you any idea of *marrying*? I do not think, from several things you have said on that subject, that you have. It does not appear to me that there is any friend sufficiently dear to you.—I might have omitted this question. I will do as much: I will answer it. You have not.—Then you shall live with us,—at least, some time hence. This time shall be indefinite now. Harriet is above the littleness of jealousy, of which you at first suspected her. She will see this letter; and already feels for you the same

kind of affection that I do, though not with the same intensity.

Certainly, any one who got hold of this letter would think I was a Bedlamite. Well, *you* do not; and my reputation for *madness* is too well-established to gain any firmness or addition from this letter.

I have received your note from Brighton (I make more differences between acquaintances, and friends or dear friends, than between notes, letters, and volumes). What bears and monkeys should I suppose were your associates, if you did not add to their happiness! or rather would they not be stones, petrifications? You certainly tell me truism when you egotize at all. This is owing to your want of vanity, or rather want of self-sufficiency,—a little more of which I wish to make you have. I love you to talk of yourself: it is more to me than all you can say on any other

subject. Not but what everything that you say gives me the greatest pleasure.

I have heard from my uncle, who is going to send me £50.—Despairing of his power to do so, I had previously written to request the D[uke] of Norfolk to lend me £100: so, if the Duke complies, we shall be very rich. I shall likewise make money in Ireland, All the money I get shall be squeezed out of the rich. The poor cannot understand, and would not buy, my poems: therefore I shall print them expensively. My metaphysics will be also printed expensively,—the first edition, that is (I am vain enough to hope for a second). The *Address to the Irish* shall be printed very cheap, and I shall wilfully lose money by it. I shall distribute [it] throughout Ireland, either personally or by means of booksellers. The novel will be printed cheaply.

How do *you* get on about money?

This is a vile question to mention in our correspondence ; but tell me. Pecuniary obligations are things too silly to be named among us : I never feel these things. I have reasons for my insensibility. It all depends on love of fame, and fear of infamy ; which, but for the opportunities which the one gives and the other takes away of being beneficent, are entitled to our completest contempt. *Answer this.*

Here follow a few stanzas which may amuse you. I was once rather fond of the Devil.

1.

The Devil went out a-walking one day,
Being tired of staying in Hell.
He dressed himself in his Sunday array ;
And the reason that he was dressed so
 gay
Was to cunningly pry
Whether under the sky
The affairs of Earth went well.

II.

He poked his hot nose into corners so
small
One would think that the innocents
there,
Poor creatures ! were just doing nothing
at all,
But settling some dress, or arranging
some ball :
The Devil saw deeper there.

III.

He peeped in each hole, to each
chamber stole,
His promising live-stock to view.
Grinning applause
He just shows his claws :
And Satan laughed in the mirth of his soul
That they started with fright
From *his* ugly sight
Whose works they delighted to do.

IV.

A Parson with whom, in the house of
prayer,
The Devil sate side by side,
Bawled out that, if the Devil were
[there],
His presence he couldn't abide.
"Ha ha!" thought Old Nick,
"That's a very stale trick :
For, without the Devil,
O favourite of evil,
In thy carriage thou wouldst not
ride !"

V.

He saw the Devil [? a Lawyer] a viper
slay
Under his brief-covered table :
It reminded the Devil marvellously
Of the story of Cain and Abel.

VI.

Satan next saw a brainless king ;
Many imps he saw near there on the
wing :

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In a house as hot as his own.
They flapped the black pennon, and
twisted the sting,
Close to the very throne.

VII.

"Ah ah!" cried Satan, "the pasture
is good!
My cattle will here thrive better than
others!
They will have for their food
News of human blood:
They will drink the groans of the dying
and dead,
And supperless never will go to bed,
Which will make 'em as fat as their
brothers."

VIII.

The Devil was walking in the Park,
Dressed like a Bond Street beau:
Nor, although his visage was rather
dark,
And his mouth was wide, his chin
came out,

And something like Castlereagh was
his snout,
He might be called so-so.

XII.

Why does the Devil grin so wide,
And show the horse teeth within? —
Nine-and-ninety on each side,
By the clearest reckoning!

Here the poetry ends. The fact is,
he saw the Prince reviewing a regiment
of hussars.

Well, is not this trifling? A most
teazing thing, if you are not in a laugh-
ing mood. But I can laugh or weep
with you.

Well, write soon. We are not going
to Ireland this week or next, but soon,
I hope.

I have changed the shape of my
paper, because I am afraid they make
you pay double; and you are a very
naughty girl if you do this.

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Harriet will write soon : she sends her love to you. By the bye, tell Mrs. Adams that I love her, and will see her whenever I come to Sussex. Do not make your seal so large, for you destroy a great deal of what I value.

Yours beyond this being

Most imperishably,

P. B. S.

You have said no more of the immortality of the soul. Do you not believe it? I do; but I cannot tell you why in a letter—at least, not clearly. You will want some feelings which are to me cogent and resistless arguments. Do not consider it a gloomy subject: do not think me prejudiced. We *will* reason, and abide by the result. I shall get Godwin's opinion of this when I can.

LETTER XXVII.

KESWICK, [CUMBERLAND.
Sunday], Jan. 26, 1812.

[*Written by Harriet.*]

MY DEAR MADAM,

Your letter has given me great pain, when I think that one so amiable should be made the sport of an unfeeling and prejudiced woman. I had loved this Anne, for I thought her amiable and sensible : but how often are we deceived in children ! You are unhappy, my dear friend, about her ; and what can we do to restore your felicity ? Would that you were here ! How do I every day hate the foolish customs of society that shackle all our projects !

You beg me to pardon you for committing a very slight error : it is now *your* turn to pardon *me*. I have sent

you a letter which I am afraid will add to your melancholy : yet it is true what I have said, and now I am quite angry that I sent it. Yet I was afraid you might hear the circumstance much more dreadful than it really was. But do not, my dear Madam, suffer yourself to be alarmed at it ; for now all is quiet and tranquil, nor do we expect any more alarms, and, if we have (which is not at all likely), we are well guarded. I hope you will not let it prey upon you, but endeavour to forget it as soon as read : and indeed, if you have not read it before you receive this, let me beg of you to burn it unopened.

Percy is writing to Captain Pilfold : he means to put him right in respect to what my aunt has told him. He has therefore made me fill up this large sheet. I wish he had done it himself, as to a certainty it would be much more entertaining than this. He is much better than he has been for some time ; and I

hope as he gets stronger, he will outgrow his nervous complaints.

Next week we think of going to Ireland: therefore you had better direct your next letter to the Post Office, Dublin. I need not tell [you] I wish we were there; though I have never been on the sea, therefore I do not know what an effect it may have upon me,—though now I can bear the journey better than if I were you know what; which I do not expect will be the case for some time,—years perhaps. But now adieu to that subject.

I am reading a new thing written after the Revolution; but there are none of the great characters mentioned, therefore I am quite disappointed. Southey has lent them to us.

I shall write again to-morrow as I have a great deal to say. In the meantime believe me

Your most affectionate sincere friend,
H. S.

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[*Written by Shelley.*]

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I eagerly answer your letter. It contains very bad news. I grieve at human nature; but am so far from despairing that I can readily trace all that is evil, even in the youngest, to the sophistications of society. It will not appear surprising that some original taint of our nature has been adopted as an opinion by the unthinking, when they perceive how very early depraved dispositions are exhibited. But, when it is considered what exhaustless pains are taken by nurses and parents to make wrong impressions on the infant mind, I cannot be surprised at the earliest traits of evil and mistake. I truly sympathize with your wrongs. These are, however, of such a nature as will so frequently occur that we must strive to consider them with unfeelingness, and let conscious rectitude inspire an honourable pride which shall infuse elevated

tranquillity into the soul. I did not expect this return of kindness from Anne. She is a character who will now mingle in the mass of common life : the seeds which you have sown will spring up among tares and brambles. The dreary intercourse of daily life will blast the suckers ere they even attain adolescence. Here is an addition to that daily load of disappointment which weighs upon the mind, and checks the passionateness of hope. I will, however, cling to those who are deservedly *now* the landing-places of my expectancy ; and, when *they* fail, human nature will be to me an unweeded garden, and the face of Earth hold no monster so heartless and unnatural as Man.

Think not for one moment that I have doubted you. The confidence that I have in the purity and immutableness of your principles surpasses even that which I possess in my own. These expressions are blasphemous to love

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and friendship. Think of them as of the ebullitions of a train of fleeting thought, as of the cloud which momentarily obscures the moon, then sails into the azure of night.

Harriet has told you of a circumstance which has alarmed her. I consider it as a complete casual occurrence which, having met with once, we are more likely not to meet with again. The man evidently wanted to rifle my pockets: my falling within the house defeated his intention. There is nothing in this to alarm you. I was afraid you might see it in the newspaper, and fancy that the blow had injured me.

Dismiss all fears of assassins and spies and prisons. Let me have your confident hopes of safety and success, as well as the earnest good wishes which I fancy I hear you breathing to fill the sails of our packet, and be like ministrant angels to us. All is now prepared for

Ireland, except the arrival of our £100, daily expected from Whitton the attorney. By the bye, my father has allowed me £200 per annum, attended with the compliment that he did it to *prevent my cheating strangers*.—All is prepared. I have been busily engaged in an *Address to the Irish*, which will be printed as Paine's works were, and pasted on the walls of Dublin. My poems will be printed there, *Hubert*, and the *Essays*.

We shall then meet in Wales. I shall try to domesticate in some antique feudal castle whose mouldering turrets are fit emblems of decaying inequality and oppression; whilst the ivy shall wave its green banners above, like liberty, and flourish upon the edifice that essayed to crush its root. As to the ghosts, I shall welcome them, although Harriet protests against my invoking them. But they would tell tales of times of old; and it would add to the picturesqueness of the scenery to see their

thin forms flitting through the vaulted charnels. Perhaps the Captain will come, and my aunt and the little things: perhaps you will bring the dear little Americans, and my mother Mrs. Adams. Perhaps Godwin will come: I shall try to induce him.—These castles are somewhat aërial at present; but I hope it is not a crime, in this mortal life, to solace ourselves with hopes. Mine are always rather visionary. In the basis of this scheme, however,—if you and I live—we will not be disappointed.

I hear from my uncle that Sir B. [ysshé] Shelley is not likely to live long—that he will soon die. He is a complete atheist, and builds all his hopes on annihilation. He has acted very ill to three wives. He is a bad man. I never had respect for him: I always regarded him as a curse on society. I shall not grieve at his death. I will not wear mourning: I will not

attend his funeral. I shall think of his departure as of that of a hard-hearted reprobate. I will never countenance a lying estimation of my own feelings.

I have the vanity to think that you will be pleased with my Address to the Irish. It is intended to familiarize to uneducated apprehensions ideas of liberty, benevolence, *peace*, and toleration. It is *secretly* intended also as a preliminary to other pamphlets to shake Catholicism on its basis, and to induce Quakerish and Socinian principles of politics, without objecting to the Christian religion,—which would be no good to the vulgar just now, and cast an odium over the other principles which are advanced.

The volume of poetry will be, I fear, an inferior production: it will be only valuable to philosophical and reflecting minds who love to trace the early state of human feelings and opinions,—who can make allowances

for some bad versification. None is more qualified than yourself, my friend, to come to a right judgment on this score ; though a consideration of your partiality for the author will prevent him from thinking you infallible in things that regarded his mental powers : —*Hubert* I have told you of.

Southey regrets our going. The Calverts were much against it ; nay, all of them violently, except Mrs. C[alvert], who wishes us success heartily. We *shall* have success : I am perfectly confident of the impossibility of failure. Let your pure spirit animate our proceedings. Oh that you were with us ! You have said you are not handsome : but, though the sleekness of your skin, the symmetry of your form, might not attract the courtiers of Dublin Castle, yet that tongue of energy, and that eye of fire, would awe them into native insignificance, and command the conviction of

those whose hearts vibrate in unison with justice and benevolence.

Dinner surprised me in the midst of my letter. I have since seen yours to Harriet. Oh, my dearest friend, do not suffer the little ingratitude of one of the vipers of the world to sting you too severely! Do feel. . . Yes, do feel, that I may feel with you; that every vibration of your nerves may be assimilated to mine, mine to yours. Dare all!

You have mistaken Harriet: she is not pregnant. It was a piece of good fortune which I could not expect. I can truly imagine your hopes and feelings concerning the possibility of this circumstance. I hope to have a large family of children: it will bind *you* and me closer, and Harriet. I, who believe in the omnipotence of education, have no fears for their eventual well-being.

Harriet has filled up most of this

letter, whilst I have been writing to the Captain. Do not consider this as a *letter*: I owe you one now. You shall have full payment.

I am now, as Harriet can tell you, quite recovered from the little nervous attack I mentioned. Do not alarm yourself either about murderers, spies, government, prisons, or nerves. I must (as I said) have hopes, and those very confident ones, from *you*, to fill the sails of our packet to Dublin.

The post-woman waits ; and therefore, my dearest friend, I bid you adieu. Happiness and hope attend my dearest friend until we meet at the Post-office, Dublin !

Your P. B. S.

I have made a strong, though vulgar appeal to the feelings of the post-master, as to my veracity about the single sheet.*

* [The letter is addressed outside to Miss Hitchener, along with the words : "Single sheet, by God !"]

LETTER XXVIII.

KESWICK, [CUMBERLAND.]

Wednesday [January 29, 1812.]

ON Monday we depart for Ireland. This is probably the last letter you will receive from Keswick. We are staying at Calvert's, and our £100 has arrived. Prospects appear fair ; but I have learned to doubt of the result of all human enterprises, whilst my language and my countenance express the confidence of enthusiasm, and my heart rebels against the dismal suggestions of possible evil.

I do not ask you *wherefore* you are unhappy, my dearest friend, because I sympathize with every feeling which the unkindness of ingratitude excites in you. But I tell you to subdue it, for *our* sakes, and for the sake of that world to which I will suppose that you

are destined to be an ornament and a glory. Your present state is isolated and friendless ; even worse, daily ingratitude and unexpected duplicity cut you to the heart. You suffer the severities of ill fortune ; and all the dreary intercourse of daily life is unmingled by consolation, save the infrequent post-days. And what can letters do ? They can tell you that you are beloved ; can prove to you that I am yours ; but this only at intervals. With what bitter force will ingratitude and duplicity recur ! This is more than duty demands : for a devotement like yours some recompence is to be expected. I will find one for you—though here a corner of self comes in. Come and live with us. You are not one to start at this. “What will the world say ?” What they please, precisely. Those who know anything of our public and private character will believe any scandal as soon as Sir F. Burdett’s friends

would give credit to the story of his keeping *five* mistresses in Tottenham Court Road. This is one of the *Morning Post* stories. Nor will the world's whispers affect our usefulness. In what manner? Who will credit that, when I made a Scotch marriage with a woman who is handsome, any criminality, of the nature of infidelity, can be attached to me? Who will believe, when they read our publications, but that our conduct is in *some degree* regulated by such impressions, and repeated endeavours to counteract general demoralization? And, supposing after all that they *did* believe this, are we answerable for their silly notions? Is our usefulness and happiness, which latter must in some degree conduce to the former, to be sacrificed to opinion? Is expediency to be the rule of our conduct? Ought minds *unisonous* in reason and feeling to be separated by the inferences

which others may draw from their conduct?

Let us attempt to form this Paradise, and defy the destroyers. Calm consistent reasoning will defeat the most terrible. Besides, you *may* be eminently useful : the union of our minds will be much more efficacious than a state of separate endeavour. I shall excite you to action; you will excite me to just speculation. We should mutually correct each other's weaknesses, and confirm our powers. Harriet, Eliza, and Percy, all join to entreat that you will *attempt* to come—to consider the point without having decided against us previously. How extensive might not be your usefulness, how improved and confirmed your speculations of justness! What admirable and excellent greatness might you not add to the grandeur and firmness of your present character! And I—how firm and collected should I not become! I should possibly gain the advantage in

the exchange of qualities ; but *my* powers are such as would augment yours. I perceive in you the embryo of a mighty intellect which may one day enlighten thousands. How desirous ought I not to be, if I conceive that the one spark which glimmers through mine should kindle a blaze by which nations may rejoice !

Am I not earnest that you should come ?— But consider this point. We have enough money for all of us. There is no doubt but that you could do more good with us than at Hurst. Explain your plan to your father : tell him that your considerations of usefulness lead you to join yourself with us. I will not insult your confidence by supposing that you can fear [but] that you will be independent amongst us. Whenever you come, you have nothing to do but to throw yourself into the mail, and, at the end of your journey, I shall be waiting for you.

In the summer we *shall* see you. Can you make up your mind never to leave us? How consummate *then* might not our publications be; how directed by the close analysis of reasoning, how animated by the emanations of your warmer heart! Have you no money? Write and say so. If not we can easily spare some: we shall have superfluity in Dublin.

Will you well consider this? Oh, my dearest friend, when I think of the uncertainty and transitoriness of human life and its occupations, when I consider its fleeting prospects and its fluctuating principles, how desirous am I to crowd into its sphere as much usefulness as possible! We have but a certain time allotted us in which to do its business: how much does it become us to improve and multiply this time; and to regard every hour neglected, mis-spent, or unimproved, as so much lost to the cause of virtue, liberty, and happiness

I hope to be compelled to [have] recourse to laudanum no more. My health is re-established, and I am now strong in hope and nerve. Your hopes must go with us: I must have no horrible forebodings. Everybody is not killed that goes to Dublin. Perhaps many are now on the road for the very same purpose as that which we propose.

As to what you say of the Duke of Norfolk, it is quite unfounded. The D[uke] is a deist. The Duke is far from the best of the English noblemen: he is not a moral man, but certainly is not attached to Catholicism. He desires and votes for Reform, though he has not virtue enough to begin it in his own person. He is in every respect a character of mediocrity. Depend upon it, I have nothing to fear either from him or his emissaries. The Duke is as [little] my friend as he is yours: he merely desires to gratify his own family, his own borough-interest.

"Passive virtue is" *not* "your sphere of action:" most active you ought to be. Come, come to Ireland. Arrange your affairs, give up school. It is a noble field. Energies like yours ought to be unconfined. Write for what money you want. You do not fear the journey; the hatred of the world is despicable to you. Come, come,—and share with us the noblest success, or the most glorious martyrdom.— Here is an appeal to the feelings of a noble mind! I ought to be ashamed of myself. Consider merely the considerations of *usefulness*, and put out of the question all foolish rant of persuasion. Yet come: it is right that you should come. Assert your freedom—the freedom of Truth and Nature.

You will hear from me again. Adieu, my dearest friend. I shall write, before we leave K[eswick], again.

Yours

[*Written by Harriet.*]

WHY is my dear friend unhappy, and why are you not with us? Why will you suffer the opinion of the world to keep you from us? Would it not be better to leave the world to itself, and come and be happy whilst it is in your power? Remember, life is short. What shall I say to bring you to us? Is there nothing we can urge to shake you? Why are we separated? Should we not be more useful all together? You would, by your arguments, countenance ours: as you are older than I am, therefore people would not think what I say so foolish. Then why will you not join us? I am well convinced that, if you were in Ireland, you might do as much good as Percy. Indeed I am hurt at the idea of your being unhappy: and why would you be the slave of a world that has persecuted you, and which continues to wound you in every way it can?

O my friend, what I say may have no weight. I know I am much younger than yourself, and that your judgment is much superior to mine. You have seen more of the world than myself. Yet, if you knew how ardent we are to have you near us, I am sure you would comply. I cannot wait till the summer : you must come to us in Ireland.

I am Irish : I claim kinship with them. I have done with the English : I have witnessed too much of John Bull, and I am ashamed of him. Till I am disappointed in the brothers and sisters of my affection, I will claim kindred with those brave sons of the ocean ; and, when I am deceived in them, it will be enough.

I have never told you of my sister. 'Tis well : words can never sufficiently express her kindness and goodness to me. She is my more than mother. What do I not owe to her gentle care ?

Everything. When you see her, you will form your judgment of her. I did think, before I was acquainted with you, that she was the best and most superior woman in the world. I do not say I have changed my opinion : that remains fixed. I have only so far changed it as to think there are some like her ; but, as to being better, that I cannot think. She begs me to tell you that she is no lover of forms and ceremonies. She has long loved and admired you, my dear friend : so do not call her "Miss Westbrook." She is your sister, and mine. How oft have I blessed that Providence who has given me such a treasure ! Did you but know her as I do, you would not wonder at my love for her. Her amiable qualities gain her friends in all who have the happiness of knowing her. But I will say no more, as I am unable to do her justice.

I know not if you have bad weather in Sussex. Here it is so uncertain you never know if the morrow will be fine. All this week has been very stormy, and last night and to-day it has never ceased.

We are spending the last week with our amiable friends [the] Calverts. We are so much indebted to them! They have been extremely kind and attentive. She is a most amiable woman, and I wish you were here to see her. She saw us reading your last letter, at which she was very much surprised, the length was so uncommon.

You will think of us next Monday night: then we set sail. 'Twill be either pleasure or not: I suspect we shall be very sick. We will write from the Isle of Man, if you do not hear from us before.

There seems to be sad work in Ireland; but I hope Percy will escape all prosecutions.

I hope we shall hear from you again soon. When we do not hear from you it is quite a blank.

I must now say adieu. I hope you will put the most favourable constructions on what we have said. Keep up your spirits, and believe me ever

Your sincere, affectionate friend,

H. S.

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LETTER XXIX.

[WHITEHAVEN,

Monday, February 3rd, 1812.]

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

WE are now at Whitehaven — which is a miserable manufacturing sea-port town. I write to you a short letter to inform you of our safety, and that the wind which will fill the sails of our packet to-night is favourable and fresh. Certainly it is laden with some of your benedictions, or with the breath of the disembodied virtuous who smile upon our attempt. We set off to-night at twelve o'clock, and arrive at the Isle of Man, whence you will hear from us to-morrow morning; thence we proceed, when the wind

serves, to Dublin. We may be detained some days in the Island ; if the weather is fine, we shall not regret it ; at all events, we shall escape this filthy town and horrible inn.

Now do you not think of us with other feelings than those of hope and confidence. I know that belief is not a voluntary action of the mind, but I think your confidence would not be groundless. To give you an idea of the perfect fearlessness with which Harriet and Eliza accompany my attempt,—they think of no inconveniences but those of a wet night and sea-sickness, which, in fact, we find to be the only real ones. Assassination, either by private or public menace, appears to me to be the phantom of a mind whose affectionate friendship has outran the real state of the case. Assure yourself that such things are now superannuated and unfeasible. Give me, as I have before said, the

confidence of your hope, the sanguineness of your certainty, joined to that concern for welfare which we mutually felt. For, my friend, wrong me not by thinking that, in this bustle of present events, and enthusiastic anticipation of future, you are forgotten or unheeded, or lightly remembered. No : your coöperation and presence is wanting to perfect the present ; and with the certainty of hope do I conceive of you in the future as a friend, and dear friend, who will form the foreground of the future which my fancy designs.

We felt regret at leaving Keswick. I passed Southey's house without *one* sting. He is a man who *may* be amiable in his private character, stained and false as is his public one. He *may* be amiable ; but, if he is, my feelings are liars, and I have been so long accustomed to trust to them in these cases, that the opinion of the world is not the likeliest

criminator to impeach their credibility.

But we left the Calverts. I hope some day to show you *Mrs.* Calvert; I shall not forget her, but will preserve her memory as another flower to compose a garland which I intend to present to *you*. Assure yourself that it is a fragrant one; that, if it breathes not of heaven, I am an imposter, and a silly gardener that picks weeds where roses grow.

I confess that I cannot expect you will come to us *now*. If you do, it will be a piece of good fortune for which my mind will be unprepared, but which it will hail with more delight than the magi did "the day-spring from on high." But in the summer, when you come to us,—if you depart I shall say you are "the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears, and harkeneth not to the voice of the charmer." I stop the wheels of the former sentence for a

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minute, just to say that I do not even *allegorise* myself by thy "charmer."

I entreat you, do not allow the ingratitude of that little viper Anne to disturb you : nor think it anything like an appearance of "original sin." I do not tell you, by the former, to staunch the beating arteries of your heart of sensibility : turn the channel to some better and some greater object—"the welfare of general man," even sympathize with me in Dublin. Of the latter, I will give you a reason hereafter : indeed, I believe that I have given you many already.

Well, adieu. Harriet and Eliza, in excellent spirits, bid you an affectionate adieu.

Pray, what are you to be *called* when you come to us? for Eliza's name is "Eliza," and "Miss Hitchener" is too long, too broad, and too deep.—Adieu.

Your

P. B. SHELLEY.

LETTER XXX.

DUBLIN,

[Thursday] February 13th, 1812.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

LAST night we arrived safe in this city. It was useless to have written to you before. Now I have only time for a line to tell you of our safety. We were driven by a storm quite to the north of Ireland, and yesterday was the end of our journey thence. Expect to hear more ; all is well.

Your affectionate

P. B. SHELLEY.

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[Written by Harriet.]

I have no time :— the day after to-morrow. Direct to us—

*Mr. Dunn's,
No. 7 Sackville Street,
Dublin.*

Write soon.

LETTER XXXI.

DUBLIN,

7 Sackville Street,

[Friday] February 14, 1812.

Mr. Dunn's, Woollen Draper.

At length I can write to you. I have been anxiously desirous to put matters in train for my enterprise : this has engaged me. How eagerly do I fly to you !

My dearest friend, think not that you were forgotten yesterday : you were the boldest foreground in the picture of my fancy. I have read all your letters. They came at breakfast yesterday, after I had sent my hasty guarantee of our safety. Now I have read them. What feelings have they excited ! The words

gratitude, sympathy, and hope, are surely too unimpassioned to express them. At length, however, you are free from anxiety for our safety, as *here* we have nothing to apprehend but Government, which will not, assure yourself, dare to be so barefacedly offensive as to attack my *Address*: it will breathe the spirit of peace, toleration, and patience. In short, in a few posts it will be sent to you.

I shall continue to write to you as freely as from Keswick: whether our letters be inspected or not I cannot tell. If they are, this I know—that their hatred to me will not thereby become stronger, or their conviction of my *discontentedness* clearer; as my name, which will be prefixed to the *Address*, will show that my deeds are not deeds of darkness, nor my counsels those of mystery and fear. Dread nothing for me. The course of my conduct in Ireland (as shall the entire course of my life)

shall be marked by openness and sincerity. The peace and toleration which I recommend can make no good men my enemies : I should blush to call a *bad* man my friend.

Your letter, my friend, has added energy to my hopes,—tenfold activity to my exertions here. We will meet you in Wales, and never part again. You shall not cross the Channel alone : it will not do. In compliance with Harriet's earnest solicitations, I entreated you instantly to come and join our circle ; to resign your school,—all, everything,—for us and the Irish cause. This could not be done, I now see plainly. Consistently with the duties which you have imposed upon yourself—duties which I ought to have respected—it could not be done. But the warmth of our hearts ran away with the coolness of our heads : forgive the fault of friendship.—But summer will come.

The ocean rolls between us. O thou ocean, whose multitudinous billows ever lash Erin's green isle, on whose shores this venturous arm would plant the flag of liberty, roll on! And, with each wave whose echoings die, amid thy melancholy silentness shall die a moment too—one of those moments which part my friend and me! I could stand upon thy shores, O Erin, and could count the billows that, in their unceasing swell, dash on thy beach, and every wave might seem an instrument in Time the giant's grasp to burst the barriers of Eternity. Proceed, thou giant, conquering and to conquer! March on thy lonely way! The nations fall beneath thy noiseless footstep: pyramids that for millenniums have defied the blast, and laughed at lightnings, thou dost crush to nought. Yon monarch in his solitary pomp is but the fungus of a winter day that thy light footstep presses into dust. Thou

art a conqueror, Time! All things give way before thee, but "the fixed and virtuous will," the sacred sympathy of soul which was when thou wert not, which shall be when thou perishest.

Summer will come, and with it thou, more welcome than its genial breeze, more welcome than the long lightsome day when the sophistication of candle-light is almost dispensed with, when we quit the woe and pride that mars the city's peace, and seek the rarer instances of human misery and vice which relieve the contemplation in the country. Dearest friend, come to us all at midsummer, never to part again. Lose in our little circle the taunts of the unthinking, the pride of the worldling, the lowliness of grandeur. Come: for the severe virtue that has guided thee thus far points out *now* a path whereon friendship has scattered flowers. Nothing shall prevent our eternal union in the summer. I ought to count my-

self a favoured mortal, with such a wife and friend (these human names and distinctions perhaps are necessary in the present state of society). You see I look forward to the period in which pain and evil, the consequences or concomitants of selfish passion, shall cease.

Now as to the means. Your dear little Americans may come and live with us. (*Suppose there was a little stranger to play with them*: this is, however, a hope which I do not anticipate but at some distance.) It appears to me that a plain representation of your views and motives to your father, told in all their energetic simplicity of singleness, would best reconcile him to your Welsh plan. Would he call it visionary,—all very well in theory, but impracticable, and useless were it practicable? Is he one who makes a distinction between the profession of certain principles, and acting up to

that profession? If he is, then is he a man unworthy of my high-souled friend. He would then deserve not the unexampled sacrifice of her devotion—a sacrifice of what might thrill millions with feelings of virtue, and breathe a soul into the corpse of a nation. For much do I expect from you: to whom much is given, from these much is expected. Nature, God, or Chance, has given you talents which have risen above the disadvantages of indigence and low birth, which are to you topics of glory incommunicable to me—and (a paraphrase on the narrowness that marked Nelson's dying hour) "The world expects every being to do its duty."—But your father is not this man; he is not hardened to the perception of truth; his eyelids are not sealed to its emanations. He will approve of your coming. Shortly perhaps he will behold the glorious fruits of a tree the natural scion of his own, and,

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so far as depends on himself, I hope a moral one. As to money, after that period you need demand none from him. £400 per an. will be quite enough for us all: our publications would supply the deficiency. Well do I know that economy is the greatest generosity; although we cannot practise it so strictly in Dublin as I could wish. This will, however, be but short.

Have you heard that a new republic is set up in Mexico? I have just written the following tribute to its success.

L.

Brothers! between you and me,
Whirlwinds sweep and billows roar:
Yet in spirit oft I see
On thy wild and winding shore

Freedom's bloodless banners wave,—
Feel the pulses of the brave
Unextinguished in the grave —
 See them drenched in sacred gore,—
Catch the warrior's gasping breath
Murmuring "Liberty or death !

II.

Shout aloud ! Let every slave,
 Crouching at Corruption's throne,
Start into a man, and brave
 Racks and chains without a groan ;
And the castle's heartless glow,
And the hovel's vice and woe,
Fade like gaudy flowers that blow—
 Weeds that peep, and then are gone ;
Whilst, from misery's ashes risen,
Love shall burst the captive's prison.

III.

Cotopaxi ! bid the sound
 Through thy sister-mountains ring,
Till each valley smile around
 At the blissful welcoming !

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And O thou stern Ocean deep,
Thou whose foamy billows sweep
Shores where thousands wake to weep
 Whilst they curse a villain king,
On the winds that fan thy breast
Bear thou news of Freedom's rest !

IV.

Ere the day-star dawn of love,
 Where the flag of war unfurled
Floats with crimson stain above
 The fabric of a ruined world—
Never but to vengeance driven
When the patriot's spirit shriven
Seeks in death its native heaven !
 There, to desolation hurled,
Widowed love may watch thy bier,
Balm thee with its dying tear.

Bear witness, Erin, when thine injured
 isle
Sees summer on its verdant pastures
 smile,

Its cornfields waving in the winds that
sweep
The billowy surface of thy circling
deep,—
Thou tree whose shadow o'er the
Atlantic gave
Peace, wealth, and beauty, to its
friendly wave.
* * * * * its blossoms fade,
And blighted are the leaves that cast
its shade,
Whilst the cold hand gathers its scanty
fruit,
Whose chillness struck a canker to its
root.

These are merely sent as lineaments
in the picture of my mind. On these
topics I find that I sometimes can write
poetry when I feel—such as it is.

Do I not know, my friend, what you
feel for the sacred cause of truth and
liberty? Am I not assured of your

devotedness to virtue? Do I doubt the pleasure with which you would offer yourself a sacrifice? No, never! Do not encourage within yourself such a supposition, even whilst you form in your mind a disavowal of its reality. I believe in you; and, when I say that I believe in you, I mean, with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my strength.

Well—my *Address* will soon come out. It will be instantly followed by another, with downright proposals for instituting associations for bettering the condition of human-kind. I—even I, weak, young, poor, as I am—will attempt to organize them, the society of peace and love. Oh that I may be a successful apostle of this true religion, the religion of Philanthropy! At all events, I *will* have a Debating Society, and see what will grow out of that. This is the crisis for the attempt.

Have you heard of the Mexico affair?

You *cannot* be vain. Attempt it for my sake : attempt it, and you will come to have a right idea of your own powers. The most useful death that I can conceive of, as happening to you, must be far *less* beneficial to mankind than an existence of but a year, such as yours will be. Do not think I have set up the trade of prophesying, but I can deduce moral effects from moral causes.

In a few days I shall have more—much more—to tell you. Godwin has introduced me to Mr. Curran. I took the letter this morning : he was not at home. I shall see him soon.

I have not seen Flower's book : I have that on the Organic Remains to read with you. You have not seen Tom Paine's works. Eliza is going to employ herself in collecting the useful passages, which we shall publish. She is now making a red cloak, which will be finished before dinner.

Now, my dearest friend, you will re-

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member me, as I remember [you]. The thought of your approbation is to me more exhilarating than the applause of thousands. You animate me.

I wish this letter now had reached you. Do not fear postmasters. Harriet sends her love : Eliza longs to see you.

Believe me

Your

PERCY SHELLEY.

LETTER XXXII.

[7 LOWER SACKVILLE ST.,
DUBLIN,

Thursday, 20 February, 1812 ?]

I SEND you the first sheet of my first *Address* as it comes out. The style of this, as you will perceive, is adapted to the lowest comprehension that can read. It will be followed by another in my own natural style though in the same strain. This one will make about thirty such pages as the enclosed: the other as much. Expect to hear soon. Happiness be with you.

My dear friend,

Yours.

LETTER XXXIII.

[DUBLIN,

Monday, February 24, 1812?]

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

YOUR letter dated 19 [February] reached me this morning.—It is with pain that I find that 10 days must intervene between our question and answer.

Things go on in Ireland as you shall hear. I have much food for interest and occupation of mind in the events of each day :—yet I earnestly desire your society, and will not be satisfied until I am convinced that it is to be ours irretrievably ; that no considerations will deprive us of it. Impelled as I am by a conviction, powerful and resistless, that the general good would be best promoted by our united efforts, it is not without pain that I should see this

important benefit sacrificed to a vague feeling, undecidable, and indefinite even in the mind wherein alone it lives. Those feelings ought to be checked, in a noble and virtuous mind, which have not for their basis the immutable relations of the universe.—I can plainly see that “your desire to procure your own subsistence” is a mixture of a strong perception of the necessity of usefulness ; and some portion of this undefined feeling, which is the result of certain prejudices respecting *money, lodging, clothes, &c.*, which, combined in an infinite variety of modifications, have entered your mind so artfully as to gain reception, where, had their unworthiness been known, they would not have been admitted. Usefulness is your end and aim. It is the cement of our attachment, it is the spirit of our life. We have a certain object to attain, and a given time in which to attain it. It is fit that all our actions

tend to this ultimate.—What is usefulness? How is it best attained? True independence is necessary, but because the chance and circumstance of birth has placed in another the power of having a house, a table, a set of chairs, are you *dependent* on that person by accepting them?—You have a right to them. Eliza keeps our common stock of money, for safety, in some hole or corner of her dress; but we are not all dependent on her, although she gives it out as we want it.—You will not be dependent on any one by coming to us. If dependence would exist anywhere, we should depend on *you*, during your continuance amongst us, for happiness and associated intellect. Let us leave to the grovelling sons of commerce and aristocracy that selfish gratitude (if this name is not polluted by the application) which calls participation of power (for money is power) a favour. By living with us, although

you gained none of this power, you would earn by your usefulness more wages than I, were I the treasurer of an empire, could discharge. As self-constituted steward of universal happiness, I could never repay you.—My dearest friend, these are vain distinctions; believe me that they are. Let us, in the great pursuit in which we are engaged, consider ourselves as little as possible in the light of individuals who have separate interests to gratify, and separate ends to answer. Do not think it necessary to the great ends of our being that persons whose pursuits are disinterested, and who love each other, must, to preserve the genuine condition of their nature, live three hundred miles apart, and make money; although, if they were together, they might occupy a house in which there would be chairs, tables, and food, enough for them all. For what are all these obligations? Now it comes home.

You cannot resist the ludicrousness and unworthiness of physical obligations between you and I. The *moral* obligations that are between us I admit and own. The gratitude, or the high mental yearning, that I feel annexed with the idea of your identity, I own : with pride and pleasure I own it. You think too meanly of yourself, too highly of me. At all events, our spirits unite in one object. Why will you thus separate us by a distinction trifling as it is worldly, and whose very inconsequence is proved by the value which the children of fashion and folly set upon it? You may not, when among us, procure your own subsistence :— how much nobler a task to procure the happiness of those who love you, *even* if this were all ! Besides your writings, which, if they do not bring money, will at all events be *useful*.

I am too, now, incapable of writing, compared to what I shall be when I

personally am enlightened with the emanations of your genius, and invigorated by the deductions of your reason. —“ Desire never fails to generate capacity.” Oh throw aside this prejudice ! You do not doubt my friendship, I do not doubt yours. Let us mingle our identities inseparably, and burst upon tyrants with the accumulated impetuosity of our acquirements and resolutions. I am eager, firm, convinced. What I have met with here you will find in my other letter.

Friend of my soul, adieu. It is with the united force of all our opinions that I attack this *subsisting* scheme of yours.

I proceed in the next sheet after I have been to the printer's.

[*This intention, it appears, remained unfulfilled.*]

LETTER XXXIV.

7 LOWER SACKVILLE STREET.

[DUBLIN.]

[Thursday] February 27 [1812].

Do not think that I neglect you. I am actively employed in what should prove to you my attachment: I am strengthening those indissoluble bonds that bind our friendship. For two days I have omitted writing to you: but each day has been filled up with the employment of disseminating the doctrines of Philanthropy and Freedom. I have already sent 400 of my little pamphlets into the world, and they have excited a sensation of wonder in Dublin: 1,100 yet remain for distribution. Copies have been sent to 60 public-houses. No prosecution is yet attempted: I do not see how it can be. Congratulate me, my friend, for everything proceeds well: I could

not expect more rapid success. The persons with whom I have got acquainted approve of my principles; and think the truths of the equality of man, the necessity of a reform, and the probability of a revolution, undeniable. But they differ from the mode of my enforcing these principles, and hold *expediency* to be necessary in politics, inasmuch as it is employed in its utmost latitude by the enemies of innovation. I hope to convince them of the contrary of this. To expect that evil will produce good, or falsehood generate truth, is almost as rational as to conceive of a patriot king, or a sincere Lord of the Bedchamber.

My friend, my dearest friend, do you not pant to be with us? If there is any truth in the sympathy of virtuous souls, you do; for I feel that I desire your presence, and that not merely for the inexpressible gratification of immediate communion, but because you

would share with me the high delight of awakening a noble nation from the lethargy of its bondage, and because the resources of your powerful intellect would mature schemes, and organize those of mine which yet are immature, —for expectation is on the tiptoe. I send a man out every day to distribute copies, with instructions how and where to give them. His accounts correspond with the multitudes of people who possess them. I stand at the balcony of our window, and watch till I see a man *who looks likely*: I throw a book to him.

On Monday my next book makes its appearance. This is addressed to a different class, recommending and proposing associations. I have in my mind a plan for proselytizing the young men at Dublin College. Those who are not entirely given up to the grossness of dissipation are perhaps reclaimable.

I know how much of good there is in human nature, spite of the overwhelming torrent of depravity which education unlooses. I see little instances of kindness and goodwill almost everywhere. Surely education, or impressions intentionally induced upon the mind, might foster and encourage the good, as it might eradicate the evil. This "Philanthropic Association" of ours is intended to unite both of these. Whilst you are with us in Wales, I shall attempt to organize one there, which shall correspond with the Dublin one. Might I not extend them all over England, and *quietly* revolutionize the country? How is Sussex disposed? Is there much intellect there? We must have the cause before the effect.

I cannot bear to hear people talk of "the Glorious Revolution of 1688." Was that period glorious when, with a presumption only equalled by their stupidity, and a short-sightedness in-

commensurable but with the blindest egotism, Parliament affected to pass an Act delivering over themselves, and their posterity to the remotest period of time, to Mary and William, and their posterity? I saw this Act yesterday for the first time; and my blood boils to think that Sidney's and Hampden's blood was wasted thus,—that even the "Defenders of Liberty," as they were called, were sunk thus low, and [should] thus attempt to arrest the perfectibility of human nature.

I have not read B. Flower, but I will. I have heard of him. If he *was* a Calvinist, he is not now. I speak thus positively, merely from a small advertisement of his that I have seen. I will get his book, and write to him, and you may thus become acquainted with him.

Did you ever read the Abbé Baruel's *Memoirs of Jacobitism*? Although it is half filled with the vilest and most un-

supported falsehoods, it is a book worth reading. To you, who know how to distinguish truth, I recommend it.

My *youth* is much against me here. Strange that truth should not be judged by its inherent excellence, independent of any reference to the utterer! To improve on this *advantage*, the servant gave out that I was only fifteen years of age. The person who was told this, of course, did not believe it.

I have not yet seen Curran. I do not like him for accepting the office of Master of the Rolls.—O'Connor, brother to the rebel Arthur, is here: [I have] written to him.

Do not fear what you say in your letters. I am resolved. Good principles are scarce here. The public papers are either oppositionist or ministerial: one is as contemptible and narrow as the other. I wish I could change this. I of course am hated by

both these parties. The remnant of united Irishmen, whose wrongs make them hate England, I have more hopes of. I have met with no determined Republicans, but I have found some who are *democratifiable*. I have met with some waverers between Christianity and Deism. I shall attempt to make them reject all the bad, and take all the good, of the Jewish books. I have often thought that the moral sayings of Jesus Christ might be very useful, if selected from the mystery and immorality which surrounds them : it is a little work I have in contemplation.

We shall leave this place at the end of April. I need not be idle in Wales : there you will come to us. Bring the dear little Americans, resign your school, and live with us for ever. I have a firm persuasion in my own mind that duty and usefulness, as well as happiness and friendship, approve, sanction,

and demand this plan. We have in this world some work to do, and only a certain time allotted us to do it in.

How persuasive an argument for the combined exertion of intellectual power !

[*Written by Harriet.*]

Percy has given me his letter to fill up, but what I'm to say I really do not know. Oh ! yesterday I received a most affectionate letter from dear Mrs. C[alvert]. Now don't you be jealous when I mention her name. She is afraid we shall effect no good here, and that our opinion will change of the Irish. We have seen very little of them as yet, but, when Percy is more known, I suppose we shall know more at the same time. My pen is very bad, according to custom. I'm sure you would laugh were you to see us give the pamphlets. We throw them out of

window, and give them to men that we pass in the streets. For myself I am ready to die of laughter when it is done, and Percy looks so grave. Yesterday he put one into a woman's hood of a cloak. She knew nothing of it, and we passed her. I could hardly get on, my muscles were so irritated.

[*Written by Shelley.*]

I have been necessarily called away whilst Harriet has been scribbling. You may guess how much my time is taken up, by my dereliction of you.

Adieu. The post will go. You will soon hear again from

Your affectionate and unalterable

PERCY.

LETTER XXXV.

17 GRAFTON STREET,

[DUBLIN.

Tuesday] March 10, 1812.

MY BELOVED FRIEND,

YOUR letters have arrived. I snatch time from circumstances of overwhelming interest to converse with you. My brain has scarcely time to consult my heart, or my heart to consult my brain; yet with the remaining nature, with thee who constituted the Trinity of my Essence, I will converse.

I cannot recount all the horrible instances of unrestricted and unlimited tyranny that have met my ears,—scarcely those which have personally occurred to me. An Irishman has been torn from his wife and family in Lisbon, because he was expatriate, and compelled to serve as a common soldier in the Portuguese army, by that mon-

ster of anti-patriotic inhumanity Beresford, the idol of the belligerents. You will soon see a copy of his letter, and soon hear of my or Sir F. Burdett's exertions in his favour. He *shall* be free. This nation shall awaken. It is attended with circumstances singularly characteristic of cowardice and tyranny: my blood boils to madness to think of it. A poor boy, whom I found starving with his mother in a hiding-place of unutterable filth and misery,—whom I rescued, and was about to teach to read,—has been snatched, on a charge of false and villainous effrontry, to a Magistrate of Hell, who gave him the alternative of the *tender* or of military servitude. He preferred neither, yet was compelled to be a soldier. This has come to my knowledge this morning. I am resolved to prosecute this business to the very jaws of Government, snatching (if possible) the poison from its fangs.—A widow-woman with

three infants were taken up by two constables. I remonstrated, I pleaded : I was everything that my powers could make me. The landlady was overcome. The constable relented : and, when I asked him if he had a heart, he said—To be sure he had, as well as another man, but that he was called out to business of this nature sometimes twenty times in a night. The woman's crime was stealing a penny loaf. She is, however, drunken, and nothing that I or any one can do can save her from ultimate ruin and starvation.

I am sick of this city, and long to be with you and peace. The rich grind the poor into abjectness, and then complain that they are abject. They goad them to famine, and hang them if they steal a loaf.—Well, adieu to this !

My own dearest friend, in the midst of these horrors thou art our star of peace. We look to thee for happiness ;

and, partial though the state of earth may render it, still will it be incomparable, and prophetic of that era when pain and vice shall vanish altogether. Your new suggestion of our joining you at Hurst is divine : it shall be so. I have not shown Harriet or E[liza] your letter as yet : they are walking with a Mr. Lawless (a valuable man) whilst I write this. But I venture to read delightful assent in the look of their hearts, and that without turning over a page. We will quit Wales with you : but more of that. Besides, I would not live far from my uncle : I value, love, and respect him. He was against this expedition ; besides [? but] conscience is a tribunal from which I dare not to appeal.

In a day or two I shall make up a parcel to you, which will come per coach. It is a terrible mistake, that of the last. The blundering honest Irishman we have committed it.

Send me the Sussex papers. Insert, or make them insert, the account of *me*. It may have a good effect on the minds of the people, as a preparation.

I send you two to-night.

The Association proceeds slowly, and I fear will not be established. Prejudices are so violent, in contradiction to my principles, that more hate me as a freethinker than love me as a votary of freedom.

You will see my letter, next week, to the Editor of the panegyricizing paper. Some will call it violent. I have at least made a stir here, and set some men's minds afloat. I *may* succeed ; but I fear I shall not, in the main object of the Association. Dublin is the most difficult of all. In Wales, I fear not : in Lewes, fear is ridiculous, I am certain.

Your book—that is a beautiful idea : cherish the spirit, and keep it alive. The Republic of Mexico proceeds and

extends. I have seen American papers, but have not had time to read them. I only know that the spirit of Republicanism extends in South America, and that the prevailing opinion is that there will soon be no province which will recognize the ancient dynasty of Spain.

I am in hopes of getting a share in the management of a paper here. I have daily had numbers of people calling on me: *none* will do. The spirit of Bigotry is high.

P. B. S.

[*Written by Harriet.*]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

A FEW days since, I received your letter, but which I do not attempt to answer at present. As you may suppose, we are full of business.

Has Percy mentioned to you a very amiable man of the name of Lawless? He is very much attached to the cause,

yet dare not act. Percy has spoken to him of you, and he wishes very much to know all about you. We have this morning been introduced to his wife, who is very near her confinement : she is a very nice woman, though not equal to him.

Your last letter has delighted me. The plan of keeping on your house is truly admirable : but what is to be done with your scholars—those you spoke of in your letter? Perhaps you might still continue to keep them. But of that more when we meet.

What has the Duke of Norfolk been saying of us? Now tell me, as I think I can confute his lordship. Write to us soon.

When will all this be at an end? When you are among us. How I long for the time! Do, dear, dear (what am I to call you?), hasten your departure for us. To Midsummer! That will be such an immense time before it arrives.

Do you know, I am so sick of this world that I long to be in another. "Strange thing!" I am [sure] you will say: yet, if you were here, you would do the same. But why do I say "here"? Do we not find tyranny and oppression everywhere? have you not plenty of it, even in your peaceful village? 'Tis everywhere.—Yes! there is one spot where it is not—America. We know an American: he says he has not seen a beggar there for this eight years.

How good you are thus to busy yourself about us, in this way!—Amiable woman! if I had known thee before, it would have been delightful: but I must be content I know you now, and this blessing I should not have had if I had never been to Clapham. So I must be content, and think myself very happy that I did go, though then I was not aware of the happiness that would result.

Send us the paper in which you have inserted the *Address* ! I have sent you this, and hope you will receive it safe —though, to tell the truth, I have my doubts upon that head.

You know we have heard from Godwin. Such letters ! You must long to read them, I am sure.

I shall now finish my sad scrawl.

LETTER XXXVI.

17 GRAFTON STREET,

DUBLIN.

[*Saturday*], *March 14*, 1812.

[*Written by Harriet.*]

WHY does my dear friend continually mislead herself, and thus apply to my judgment, which is so inferior to her own? 'Tis true you have mixed more in the world than myself. My knowledge has been very confined on account of my youth, and the situation in which I was placed. My intercourse with mankind has therefore been much less than you may imagine. When I lived with my father, I was not likely to gain much knowledge, as our circle of acquaintance was very limited, he not thinking it proper that we should mix much with society. In short, we very

seldom visited those places of fashionable resort and amusement which, from our age, might have been expected. 'Twas but seldom I visited my home, school having witnessed the greater part of my life. But do not think from this that I was ignorant of what was passing in the great world : books and a newspaper were sufficient to inform me of these. Though then a silent spectator, yet did I know that all was not as it ought to be. I looked with a fearful eye upon the vices of the great ; and thought to myself 'twas better even to be a beggar, or to be obliged to gain my bread with my needle, than to be an inhabitant of those great houses, when misery and famine howl around.

I will tell you my faults, knowing what I have to expect from your friendship. Remember my youth : and, if any excuse can be made, let that suffice. In London, you know, there are military, as well as anywhere else. When

quite a child, I admired these red-coats. This grew up with me ; and I thought the military the best as well as the most fascinating men in the world,—though at the same time I used to declare never to marry one. This was not so much on account of their vices as from the idea of their being killed. I thought, if I married any one, it should be a clergyman. Strange idea this, was it not ? But being brought up in the Christian religion, 'twas this first gave rise to it. You may conceive with what horror I first heard that Percy was an atheist ; at least, so it was given out at Clapham. At first I did not comprehend the meaning of the word : therefore, when it was explained, I was truly petrified. I wondered how he could live a moment, professing such principles, and solemnly declared that he should never change mine. I little thought of the rectitude of these principles ; and, when I wrote to him, I

used to try to shake them,—making sure he was in the wrong, and that myself was right. Yet I would listen to none of *his* arguments, so afraid I was that he should shake my belief. At the same time I believed in eternal punishment, and was dreadfully afraid of his supreme Majesty the Devil : I thought I should see him if I listened to *his* arguments. I often dreamed of him, and felt such terror when I heard his name mentioned ! This was the effect of a bad education, and living with Methodists. Now, however, this is entirely done away with, and my soul is no longer shackled with such idle fears.

You cannot suppose, my dear friend, that I suspect you of jealousy : 'twould be entertaining an idea wholly unworthy of you. Jealousy is a passion known only to the illiberal and selfish part of mankind, who have been corrupted and spoilt by the world : but this forms no part of you,—'tis utterly

impossible. As to that feeling which prompted you to write about gaining your own subsistence, I do not know by what name to define it. It could not be pride: at least, if it were, I must call it a virtuous pride that you would not be dependent upon another for subsistence when you had the means of being independent. This would be all very well, to persons that you did not love: but to us, who (I may say with truth) possess so much of your love, it is entirely ill-founded. You have given up this wild scheme, I make no doubt: indeed, your letter avows as much. To continue to think so now would be unworthy of the warmth of that friendship you have solemnly sworn to keep inviolate. Such a valuable friendship as ours ought not to be intruded on by such worldly cares: it is too sublime and too sure. Therefore I pray thee take no thought what ye shall eat, and what ye shall wear. Our

living is different to those worldlings, and you may or not adopt it as you think fit. You do not know that we have forsworn meat, and adopted the Pythagorean system. About a fortnight has elapsed since the change, and we do not find ourselves any the worse for it. What do you think of it? Many say it is a very bad plan : but, as facts go before arguments, we shall see whether the general opinion is true or false. We are delighted with it, and think it the best thing in the world. As yet there is but little change of vegetables ; but the time of year is coming on when there will be no deficiency.

Your wishes coincide with mine. I see you are as eager to meet us as we are you. In one of my letters I am so eager that I have begged you to leave Hurst and join us in Wales before Mid[summer] ; but you have explained some of your reasons, and I retract my words, though not my wishes.

Have you heard anything of this Habeas Corpus Act being suspended? I have been very much alarmed at the intelligence, though I hope it is ill-founded. If it is not, where we shall be is not known; as, from Percy's having made himself so busy in the cause of the poor country, he has raised himself many enemies who would take advantage of such a time, and instantly execute their vengeance upon him. That this may not be the case I hardly dare to hope. What can be their reason for so doing is best known to themselves. That many innocent victims will suffer is a foreboding that my heart trembles at; yet so it will be, I'm most fearful, and how is this to be remedied? God knows, and not me: but more of this when I hear how it is decided.

I do not like the name you have taken: but mind, only the name. You are fully worthy of it; but, being a

name so much out of the common way, it excites so much curiosity in the mind of the hearer. This is my only reason for not liking it. I had thought it would have been one more common, and more pleasing to the ear.

I must now bid my beloved sister adieu.

Do not write under the seal.

[*Written by Shelley.*]

You will hear from *me* soon : part of me has written to you.

I do not like Lord Fingal, or *any* of the Catholic aristocracy. Their intolerance can be equalled by nothing but the hardy wickedness and falsehood of the Prince.

My speech was misinterpreted. I spoke for more than an hour. The hisses with which they greeted me when I spoke of *religion*, though in terms of

respect, were mixed with applause when I avowed my mission. The newspapers have only noted that which did not excite disapprobation. As to an Association, my hopes daily grow fainter on that subject, as my perceptions of its necessity gain strength. I shall soon, however, have the command of a newspaper with Mr. Lawless, of whom I shall tell you more. This will be a powerful engine of amelioration. Mr. L., though he regards my ultimate hopes as visionary, is willing to acquiesce in my means. He is a republican.

Adieu. Believe that we are yours. We will live with you at Hurst. What think you of a journey to Italy in the autumn?

I hope, my beloved friend, that you have conquered that nervous headache which you mention. Do not *think* too much; do not feel too keenly. Blunt neither sensation nor reflection by any-

thing but occupation. For you, this occupation ought sometimes to be trivial.

My dear friend, adieu.

LETTER XXXVII.

NANTGWILLT, RHAYADER,
RADNORSHIRE.

[*Saturday, 18 April, 1812.*]

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

How surprised you must be at my long silence! To what may you not attribute it? What fears, suspicions, misgivings, may not have come over you! Believe me, I have felt them all; but I was unwilling to write to you when I could tell you of nothing but our little distresses. Every day for this fortnight have I anticipated that the next would be the last of our wanderings, and that then I might welcome you to something like a home.

We left Dublin, and arrived at Holyhead after a passage of wearisome length. We have traversed the whole

of Wales and heard no tidings of a house. Every inn we stopped at was the subject of new hopes, and new disappointments. We came from Barmouth to Aberystwith, thirty miles, in an open boat ; and at length have arrived at Rhayader, the very spot where I spent last summer,—and are about to take a house which its tenant is forced to quit, from bankruptcy. It is within a mile of Mr. Grove's. The house is a good one. What I mean by "good" is that there is plenty of room for all of us. There are 200 acres of arable land, including some woodland ; and the whole subject to the moderate rent of £98 a year, which I hope to make the farming more than pay. The house is not *yet* our own, although we reside here ; but will be so in the course of a month. Oh my friend, what shall I say of the scenery ? But you will enjoy it with us—which is all that is wanting to render it a perfect heaven.

I know the misgivings that come over us when we have not heard from a friend for a long time ; and when we think that he *might* have written—that he is cooled in the ardency of his attachment—and that other occupations have more charms for him than friendship. But it is not so with me. I will not here re-assert all my assertions of friendship ; but a hint that my perception of your excellences are unbounded, is enough between such as us.

The end of June is the time fixed for our meeting. Oh that the hours which divide that time from the present may roll fast ! But it *will* come. Time's pace never varies : the hopes of those who sigh for a reunion, and the fears of those who anticipate a separation, hasten not its inevitable arrival. I have a plan in embryo. In June we will part no more. This house is large ; it will contain seven bedrooms. Could

not your father accompany you? He understands a farm, and its management would be an amusement to him. He might then *always* enjoy your society—which he cannot now; and it might be a comfort to his declining years to see you independently settled—for it *would be independent*. Now consider this.

You have ere this received our box and its contents. I paid the carriage as far as I could, that is, across the Channel; and I am positive that it did not come by the post. The *Declaration of Rights* would be useful in farm-houses: it was by a similar expedient that Franklin promulgated his commercial opinions among the Americans.

Your letter enjoined us to leave Dublin. We received it a short time before we had settled to depart. The Habeas Corpus Act has not been suspended, nor probably will they do it. We left Dublin because I had done all

that I could do. If its effects were beneficial, they were not *greatly* so. I am dissatisfied with my success, but not with the attempt ; although the expense of our journey was considerable, and I ever bear in my mind that "economy is the truest generosity."

Manchester, Carlisle, Bristol, and other great towns, are in a state of disturbance. That infernal wretch the P[rince] of Wales demands more money, the Princesses must have more ; Mr. McMahon must have more. And for what ? For supplying the Augean stable of the Prince with filth which no second Hercules can cleanse. The question becomes one in the rule of three. If the murderer of Marr's family, containing six persons, deserves a gibbet, how much more does a Prince whose conduct destroys millions deserve it ?

In Wales they are all very apathetical on the subject of politics.

We will converse on what can be done here when you come.

How will the Groves admire our conduct? What will they think of *you*?

If you think it will have any good effect, I will write a letter to the Chairman (or whatever you call him) of your Book-club, recommending some further organization of the society. What think you of this?

I have written some verses on Robert Emmett, which you shall see, and which I will insert in my book of Poems.

We are now embosomed in the solitude of mountains, woods, and rivers—silent, solitary, and old, far away from any town; six miles from Rhayader, which is nearest. A ghost haunts this house, which has frequently been seen by the servants. We have several witches in our neighbourhood, and are quite stocked with fairies and hobgoblins of every description.

ELIZABETH HITCHENER. 279

Well, my dear friend, I have no larger paper, and therefore must say adieu. Recollect that I am still your friend completely and unalterably. Harriet and Eliza send their love. Harriet is now writing to Mrs. Nugent, an excellent woman whom we discovered in Dublin, and of whom she will tell you.—Adieu.

Yours eternally,

P. B. SHELLEY.

LETTER XXXVIII.

NANTGWILLT, [RHAYADER,
RADNORSHIRE.

Wednesday,] April 29th, 1812.

HARRIET has not been able to write to you. She is now recovering from a bilious attack which so overpowered her with languor that she could not hold a pen. I wonder not that the confidence which my friend ought to have in such a self as hers, is shaken by the number of her enemies, until I think of their despicable qualities ; and then I recur to the friendlessness of her present situation to account for the self-desertion by which you are overwhelmed.

Arouse yourself ! Yet a little, bear the sternness of your thorny solitude, bear desertion, contumely, and hatred, for it is the contumely and hatred of

those who know you not: and friendship and duty will soon strew on a path too flinty yet the flowers of hope and peace. Oh my dearest friend, do not think of not living with us. What! because a few paltry village-gossips repeat some silliness of their own invention till they believe it, shall those resolves be shaken which ought to survive the shock of elements and crash of worlds? What is there in the Captain's disapproval? he has been an uncle to me, I owe him gratitude for his kindness; but am I prescribed to take his word? I have examined this affair on every side, and I withdraw not an iota of my former convictions.—It raises a smile of bitterness at the world when I think on the *only possible* report which Mrs. Pilfold can have treated you with. What will she have recourse to next? *I* unfaithful to my Harriet! *You* a female Hogg! Common sense should laugh such an

idea to scorn, if indignation would wait till it could be looked upon !—But, my friend, I do not believe there are any reports abroad in the country concerning us ; Mrs. Pilfold of Cuckfield is the origin of them all. You may have another enemy. Mrs. P. wants you in the country to educate her child. *She* has made these reports, and then reported them to detain you. I see how it is. She has imposed on her husband. His nature is as open and unsuspecting as hers is artful and intriguing.

Last night, when your letter came, I did reconsider the plan. It looked almost like a blasphemy on truth when I had done. I blushed in my soul that I had doubted immutable and eternal rectitude. I will do so no more. *You* have probably considered it. I doubt not the result of your deliberations being favourable.

Whatever it may now be, I have such

confidence in the omnipotence of truth that it must be so ultimately. Harriet has just said, "She *shall* not stay away:" and never was there a prophecy that is so creditable to truth and friendship. Adieu. Keep up your spirits: it will soon be over. It is the probationary state before we all enter the heaven of virtue and friendship.

My dearest of friends, sustain yourself for your unalterable friend.

Harriet and Eliza send their love: *they* will not hear of any alteration.

In haste,
Yours ever faithfully,
PERCY.

LETTER XXXIX.

[NANTGWILLT, RHAYADER,
RADNORSHIRE.

Wednesday, April 29, 1812.]

I WRITE this scrap (I have time for no more) because I have just received your last. I will write on Thursday, our next post-day. Harriet is still so unwell as to be unable to write. She desires her kindest love, however, and joins with Eliza and myself in determining never to submit to a repeal of our plans.

Pray write me an account of the reports; I find that I have mistaken their nature. At all events, my beloved friend, keep up your spirits, keep up your resolves. May you not be mistaken in attributing excellences to your father which he does not possess! Both he and the Captain seem at least to share

some of their qualities with the mule. I think Mrs. Pilfold has made these reports. But, whatever caused them, of what consequence are they to you?

I have written to the Captain: the letter is calculated to make his soul start back to see it.

Never doubt what the heart and the head are unanimous in approving. Never doubt your own purity. Believe that I am firmly yours, and that Harriet and Eliza determine that you shall be ours.

Adieu. Depend on it that no one *can* have read our letters.

Mrs. P. has been pumping you, and then drenching you with the water. You are not their equal in cunning. Well, adieu; time howls.

Your most sincere and true.

[P. B. SHELLEY.]

LETTER XL.

NANTGWILLT, [RHAYADER,
RADNORSHIRE].

Friday Even, [1 May, 1812].

HARRIET still continues ill. I have sent for the nearest physician (forty miles from this place); and, as he is not yet arrived, shall send again to-morrow. Her indisposition has begun to wear so serious an appearance that, though not alarmed, I am anxious; as, without any visible cause, any violent fever or relaxations, her weakness has increased so much that she cannot walk across the room without assistance.

A week ago I said: "Give me Nantgwillt; fix me in this spot so retired, so lovely, so fit for the seclusion of those who think and feel. Fate, I ask no more!" Little then did I

expect my Harriet's illness, or that flaming opposition which the mischievous and credulous around you are preparing against the most cherished wishes of my heart. Now I say: "Fate, give my Harriet health, give my Portia peace, and I will excuse the remainder of my requisition." Oh my beloved friend, let not the sweet cup be dashed from the lips of those who alone can appreciate its luxury, at the instant that Fate has yielded it to their power! I have longer arguments than this expostulation in store. Yet surely this comprehends them. Does not joy include the good which we would do?

Well, my dear friend, Harriet will recover: oh, certainly she will! Her illness is of a nature comparatively slight, and I am weak to think so gloomily of it as I do sometimes. Yet she has been ill a week. Then I try to console myself:—How many weeks has not this frame tossed on a bed of

bodily pain, with a mind scarcely less diseased than the body !

Amongst all my thoughts, you are not forgotten : friend of my soul, you are not forgotten. You are to my fancy as a thunder-riven pinnacle of rock, firm amid the rushing tempest and the boiling surge ; and, when our ship anchors close to thee, the crew will cover thee with flowers !

Well, to the point.—I have written to my uncle, and written to your father : ask them to show the letters. Harriet is so languid that she can scarcely speak ; yet she *did* bid me to say that she hoped nothing would induce you to desert us, and to declare that she was irrevocably convinced that we ought all to live together. What ! Are there beings on this world who think and feel as we do, and should the bigots to world-religion (for I can call by no better name the God that inspired the Captain's arguments, and your father's

claims), should they enchain the "souls whose valour made them free"? I can think with no patience, my toleration to the hateful race of vipers that crawl upon this earth is exhausted, when I find that they have stung thee. There is a charm against their venom which thou, my friend, hast borne about thee—which thou bearest about thee still—which thou wilt ever bear. Repose thy perfect confidence in me: *I* cannot confide in a being more than I do in thee. I never admit it to be possible that you are other than I have seen and known thee. I esteem, revere, and love, every part of your character. My Harriet's attachment to you will even exceed mine. She is warmer and more affectionate than my heart, which, in its time, has had so much rubbing that it ought to be hard by this time. Your father and the Captain are near you,—we are far: and yet, my friend, when you hear their arguments, persuasions,

and threats, I think you sometimes turn your mind towards us, and ask, "What would Percy's little circle think of this? What would they say?"

Adieu. You will hear from me at greater length, as I have much to say, and much to answer.

Yours indissolubly

P. B. S.

LETTER XLI.

NANTGWILLT, [RHAYADER,
RADNORSHIRE.
Thursday,] *May 7, 1812.*

HARRIET is much recovered. Her fever has left her, and she will, to-morrow or next day, inform you herself of her convalescence. Do *you* keep up your spirits, new-string your resolutions, and all will go well.

"But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
And we'll *not* fail."

Your letter from Cuckfield to Harriet in Dublin has this day arrived. And so our dear friends are *determined to destroy our peace of mind* if we live together; determined, all for our good, to make us *all* the most miserable wretches on earth. Now this, it must

be confessed, is truly humane and condescending. But how is it to be managed? Where will they begin? In what manner will they destroy our peace of mind, without eradicating that conscious integrity whence it springs? Thinking the pickaxe of vulgar cunning, however sharp, not equal to the demolition of the noblest tree in the forest of the soul, we may, I assume, pass over the consideration of damage that cannot be effected. And what new thing have they advanced to shake this cherished plan? That you are to be *my mistress*! that you refused it whilst I was single, but that my marriage takes away all objections that before stood in the way of this singular passion! They certainly seem to have acquired a taste of fabricating the most whimsical and impossible crimes. Whence, for instance, could they have taken, but from the annals of centaurs and chimæras, the idea of a passion

whose delicacy shrank from the idea of union with its unengaged object, but whose timid scruples were completely overcome when that object was the husband of another? Trust me, my friend, they are the extemporaneous effusions of Mrs. Pilfold's brain, fertile in instant expedients, prepared to tell a thousand falsehoods to support an untruth at first perhaps unthinkingly advanced. These shapeless and undigested charges bear all the marks of her ever-ready calumny, which would hold out the right hand in affection, and with the left tear your very heartstrings. *She* is the woman!

Now, my friend, are we or are we not to sacrifice an attachment in which far more than you and I are immediately implicated,—in which far more than these dear beings are remotely concerned? And to sacrifice to what? To the world! to the swinish multitude, to the indiscriminating million, to such

as burnt the house of Priestley, such as murdered Fitzgerald, such as erect barracks in Marylebone, such as began and such as continue this liberticide war, such wretches as dragged to slavery, or (equal in unprincipled cowardice) the slaves who permit such things: for of these two classes is composed what may be called the world. But, my beloved friend, the good will not rail at us: *They* will not say that we are the slaves of contemptible passions—we who aspire to the eminence which *they* have gained—Godwin will not say so: in fine, that Conscience which [is] seated on a throne above the restless turbulence of interested feelings, will acquit at its tribunal actions and thoughts incapable of sullyng its purity. Are we, or are we not to sacrifice the immediate energizing of those reforms which the thoughtless and the every-day beings cannot conceive of as practicable or

useful?—to sacrifice these plans, ideas communicated, ameliorated, and passed through the fire of *unbiased* discussion—those plans which your soul cannot help bursting now to realize! And sacrificed to what? Eternal Truth, wherefore do I libel thy immutable name by holding this argument any longer with the most impassioned and unbending of thy votaries?

My friend, my dearest friend, you must—you shall—be with us! All our schemes, even of walks or rides, will be unfinished without you. Every day every hour, that I discuss your coming, the good that will result appears more certain, and its opportunities more frequent,—the evil vanishes. For tell me one evil that will result: think of *one* good which your residence with us will not have a tendency to accomplish. Now you say that you will first *visit* us. Do so, and let this morning's visit [usher] in the day of endless being;

at least, last as long as this life. Consider how little it is, in comparison to the eternal changes which await to commence at our dissolution. Consider how foolish it would be, were you to pay a morning visit to Miss Weekes, or any other country gossip, and ran twenty times out of the room because it was *proper*. Now *determine* on nothing until this summer visit. But how can your resolves be unbiassed, if you propose to take your scholars again? Dismiss them, then, at Midsummer, and come to us, undetermined and open to conviction.

We are not yet settled in this place. The size of the residence, with respect to the number of bedrooms, is very desirable. How many amiable beings may not be destined to occupy them! We have already determined on your apartment: I think you will come.

I wrote to your father and to the Captain. The Captain told me that

the reports were as you have stated them to be. He professed to disbelieve the "mistress" business, but asserted that I certainly was very much attached to you. I certainly should feel quite as much inclined to deny my own existence as to deny this latter charge; although I took care to assure him that, in the vague sense which he had annexed to the word "love," he was utterly mistaken. I have answered this letter of his. When you see him, request to look at the correspondence.

I have only one copy (and that torn) of Redfern's letter: I enclose it. It is a horrible case.

Tell me in your next how your political affairs get on. Who are your agents? what have you done? Take care of letting any of the *Declarations* get into the hands of priests or aristocrats.

Adieu: bear in mind our love—

Harriet's, mine, and Eliza's. Steel your heart to the poison-shafts of calumny: let them rebound from the adamantine rock. Ever beloved friend, adieu.

Yours most truly and unalterably,

P. B. S.

LETTER XLII.

NANTGWILLT, [RHAYADER,
RADNORSHIRE.

Tuesday,] *June 2, 1812.*

I HAVE not written to you now for a fortnight ! What a time ! Soon, however, we shall have a mode of communication more endearing, delightful, and immediate. Nothing shall ever prevent our meeting. The opposition of the narrow-minded and worldly shall only render more speedy and decisive what they are now inefficient to hinder ! One fortnight more, and we meet. Fortnight, fly fast, and leave the last of my wishes completed !

I have been ill with an inflammatory fever, from which I am now completely recovered. I feared to write to you with a hand unsteady and a head dis-

ordered with illness. Harriet was delegated to the task: she is no unworthy substitute.

I rejoice to think that you, my dearest friend, will speedily be our eternal inmate. Rejoice did I say? It is a word frigid and inexpressive of the idea which it is meant to excite. I have much to talk to you of—Innate Passions, God, Christianity, &c.—when we meet. Would not “co-existent with our organization” be a more correct phrase for passions than “innate?” I think I can prove to you that *our* God is the same.

[P. B. SHELLEY.]

LETTER XLIII.

CWM ELAN,

[*Saturday*] June 6, 1812.

You see where we are. Nantgwilt is not ours, nor will it be. Mrs. Hooper the possessor, has chosen to quarrel with us because we cannot give satisfactory security ; and for a time (a very short one) we are resident at Mr Grove's.

But you shall meet us, dear friend : all the varyings and fluctuations of every-day affairs shall leave our meeting unchangeable. What ! may I not say that one is a moral, the other a physical, event—that one depends upon "the virtuous will," the other upon the changeable impressions of sensuality ?—But to the point. Do not fear that my father will withdraw the allowance. I know the hidden springs of his character ; and pride would not suffer him

to withdraw what pride only actuated him to give.

I have sent a draft to town by to-day's post for the quarterly £50, which shall take us to London,—where we will meet with you, or at Hurst, as you think fit; when we shall become *inseparable*, and will talk over all the plans which float in all our brains as to our future manner of life.

As to your house being on the terms you describe, I do not see anything peremptory in that. If we think it most conducive to unselfishness to fix on it as a residence, undoubtedly we will fix there without hesitation. But might not both your and my connexions considerably curtail our exertions? Might not our central situation with relation to all our *well-meaning* enemies expose us and our views continually to their aggressions, which, contemptible as they might be with respect to our own peace of mind

would assume an entirely different aspect with regard to our usefulness? Might not my father, offended at our residence in Sussex, withdraw the allowance? Might not the Captain think a well-directed hostility effectual toward disuniting us? Might not your father, lastly, led on by the unculture of his mind, form conclusions of the utmost asperity and injustice? These are considerations which, though not presenting insurmountable obstacles, are yet subjects for consideration at our meeting.

Adieu. I write in haste, and shall answer your letter the day after tomorrow. Dearest friend, this is a letter of business. Adieu. We all unite in love to her whom we all love inexpressibly.

Your

P. B. SHELLEY.

LETTER XLIV.

CWM ELAN.

[Thursday,] June 11, 1812.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

THE news of your postscript does not much surprise me. It was to have been expected that no means would have [been] left unattempted by the Genius of Intrigue and Malice. You must know that I regard charges of resembling Lovelace with contemptuous indifference. They affect me but on one account: I fear they have an ill effect on *you*. But I should expect that they would excite in you only a smile of bitterness and unbelief.

We cannot have Nantgwillt, and are now remaining at Mr. Grove's until remittances enable us to move. The

expenses with which our board, lodging, &c., have been attended, will leave us possessed of a sum not sufficient to undertake a journey into Sussex, compatibly with independence when we arrive. You know, my friend, how much each of us regrets the necessity that detains us from instantly flying to you: but you likewise know that nothing but an unconquerable necessity interposes between friendship and its duties. We therefore determine to proceed to Ilfracombe, a town in the north of Devonshire, sixty miles from Rhayader. We shall at all events get lodgings there for the present; and there is a coach from London to Barnstaple, which is close to Ilfracombe, by which you may be quickly conveyed to those whose bosoms throb for your arrival. *Our* journey to Ilfracombe cannot exceed £8: our journey to Sussex must at least be £30. With the difference of these two sums a

house is procurable at Ilfracombe, or near it, which shall be the sanctuary of happiness.

As soon as you can arrange your affairs, take a place in the coach for London, Mr. Westbrook will give you a bed, and the next morning he will see you safe in the Barnstaple coach. Have you enough money for the journey? If not, write to us, and we will send [some] as soon as the £50 arrives. If possible, however, do not wait for the intervention of another letter and its answer. Our *well-meaning* enemies are determined to oppose your departure with every kind of method. Take *your* method of defeating them: let it be plain and simple. There is no necessity either to conceal or make public your departure: I recommend not secrecy, but calm firmness.

[P. B. SHELLEY.]

LETTER XLV.

[Thursday,] June [18, 1812.]

WE shall come at any rate. Something on which we cannot calculate has happened : means utterly unknown to us have been practised upon you. Friendship and justice command that we should do all that can be done : I hope the time will never come when we shall be deaf to their appeals.

I calculate that, on our arrival at Chepstow, £13 will remain. This may suffice for our journey by coaches across the country to you. Then we shall be penniless, and for our return to Chepstow, where Eliza will remain, depend upon your exertions with Mr. H[owel]. You had better mention my responsibility, which, if I can see Mr.

Howel when I come, I will personally give.

Affairs have now arrived at a crisis. I perceive by your letter the necessity of our journey. It is playing a momentous game. It demands coolness and resolution—such coolness as contempt for our adversaries has given Harriet and me. Calm yourself, collect yourself, my dearest friend ! How little ought your mighty soul to be shaken by the whisper of a worldling ! Let us show that truth can conquer falsehood. Let us show that prejudice is impotent when the resolution of friendship and virtue is awakened. It is a glorious cause : martyrdom in such a cause were superior than victory in any other. If what Mr. and Mrs. P[ilfold] and Co. had said of me had been, as it will be, unconnected with your peace, it would amuse me excessively. Even now I can sometimes not help smiling, though the smile is a

bitter one, when the train of their conspiracies comes across me.

About next Thursday you may expect us. I am not positive as to the day, but next week we shall be with you. Prepare yourself to leave a scene rendered hateful by impotent malice. If *you* can [procure] no money, I should conceive that *my* attempts would not be quite unsuccessful. I know not, however, how this may be. Money is our slave, not our master: it is a slave whose services we are all equally entitled to command. The best wishes, the sincerest love, of all, await you until we meet.

Yours unalterably,
P. B. SHELLEY.

Even if we are gone, Eliza will be there. You may direct to the Post-Office at Chepstow.

I think that you had better communicate to *no one* the contents of

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ELIZABETH HITCHENER. 311

HARRIET SHELLEY.

TO

ELIZABETH HITCHENER.

DUBLIN.

[Wednesday], March 18th, [1812]

MY DEAR PORTIA,

As Percy has sent you such a large Box so full of inflammable matter, I think I may be allowed to send a little, but not [of] such a nature as his. I sent you two letters in a newspaper, which I hope you received safe from the intrusion of Post-masters. I sent one of the Pamphlets to my Father in a newspaper, which was opened and charged, but which was very trifling when compared to what you and Godwin paid.

I believe I have mentioned a new acquaintance of ours, a Mrs. Nugent, who is sitting in the room now and talking to Percy about Virtue. You see how little I stand upon ceremony. I have seen her but twice before, and I find her a very agreeable, sensible woman. She has felt most severely the miseries of her country, in which she has been a very active member. She visited all the Prisons in the time of the Rebellion, to exhort the people to have courage and hope. She says it was a most dreadful task; but it was her duty, and she would not shrink from the performance[*of* it. This excellent woman, with all her notions of Philanthropy and Justice, is obliged to work for her subsistence—to work in a shop which is a furrier's; there she is every day confined to her needle. Is it not a thousand pities that such a woman should be so dependent upon others? She has visited us this

evening for about three hours, and is now returned home. The evening is the only time she can get out in the week ; but Sunday is her own, and then we are to see her. She told Percy that her country was her only love, when he asked her if she was married. She called herself *Mrs.*, I suppose on account of her age, as she looks rather old for a *Miss*. She has never been out of her country, and has no wish to leave it.

This is St. Patrick's night,* and the Irish always get very tipsy on such a night as this. The Horse Guards are pacing the streets, and will be so all the night, so fearful are they of disturbances, the poor people being very much that way inclined, as Provisions

* This shows that Harriet's letter was written on the 17th of March, and not on the "18," as she has dated it. Unless, indeed, the usual St. Patrick's Ball at Dublin Castle was for some reason held on the 18th of March, instead of the 17th in the year 1812.

are very scarce in the southern counties. Poor Irish People, how much I feel for them. Do you know, such is their ignorance, that when there is a drawing-room held, they go from some distance to see the people who keep them starving to get their luxuries ; they will crowd round the state carriages in great glee to see those within who have stripped them of their rights, and who wantonly revel in a profusion of ill-gotten luxury, whilst so many of those harmless people are wanting Bread for their wives and children. What a spectacle ! People talk of the fiery spirit of these distressed creatures, but that spirit is very much broken and ground down by the oppressors of this poor country. I may with truth say there are more Beggars in this city than any other in the world. They are so poor they have hardly a rag to cover their naked limbs, and such is their passion for drink, that when you relieve them one day you see them in

the same deplorable situation the next. Poor creatures, they live more on whiskey than anything, for meat is so dear they cannot afford to purchase any. If they had the means I do not know that they would, whiskey being so much cheaper, and to their palates so much more desirable. Yet how often do we hear people say that poverty is no evil. I think if they had experienced it they would soon alter their tone. To my idea it is the worst of all evils, as the miseries that flow from it are certainly very great; the many crimes we hear of daily are the consequences of Poverty and that to a very great degree; I think the Laws are extremely unjust—they condemn a Person to Death for stealing 13 shillings and 4 pence.

Disperse the *Declarations*. Percy says the farmers are very fond of having something posted upon their walls.

Percy has sent you all his Pamphlets

with the *Declaration of Rights*, which you will disperse to advantage. He has not many of his first *Address*, having taken great pains to circulate them through this city.

All thoughts of an Association are given up as impracticable. We shall leave this noisy town on the 7th of April, unless the Habeas Corpus Act should be suspended, and then we shall be obliged to leave here *as soon as possible*. Adieu.

[HARRIET SHELLEY.]

SUPPLEMENT.

The following Letter, which should be inserted between Nos. IV. and V., has come to light since the body of this book was printed. It is therefore inserted here in the form of a SUPPLEMENT.



LETTER XLVI.

CWM ELAN, RHAYADER,
RADNORSHIRE,
SOUTH WALES.

[Postmark—15th July, 1811.]

MY DEAR MADAM,

Your letter has just reached me, or rather has been given to me after my recovery from a short but violent nervous illness. It was occasioned by several nights of sleeplessness, and days of pressing and urgent business; nothing else could have prevented my calling on you in town, but my occupation was of such a nature as would neither admit of delay or rest, and Stoic as I profess myself, whilst yet this chain of clay fetters our nobler energies, it will at times subdue them, it will at times remind us, and that forcibly, how mutually dependent on each other are mind and body.

Well here I now am, and shall postpone the pleasure of your conversation, tho' let me hope not of your correspondence, until the period of my return to Sussex. I hope I am superior to etiquette, indeed if I am not I bely my own professions, and daring to be free court slavery. But this is *not* my disposition, and when I say the "pleasure of your correspondence" I mean to say that the ideas which those words excite are actually present.—

Did you observe in the papers an account of the trial of a wretch at Tortola for the *murder* of his *slave*: if not, read it, and remark his address to the Jury—"I have a *proper sense of religion*, and I fear not." This man's cruelties might have made Nero triumph in his comparative humanity, yet "he fears not." Is this criterion then so sure to supercede that of self-evident morality as to make a villain exult in death like Brutus? Surely this teaches

us two things—that Religion is bad for man ; that the exultation of Brutus will last, that of the tyrant cannot !

I met with a fine passage the other day in Helvetius, a French writer. “Modes of worship differ, they are therefore the work of man—Morality is accordant, *universal*, and uniform, therefore it is the Work of God”—or, as I should say, it is *Morality* which I cannot but consider as synonymous with the Deist’s God.

This country of Wales is excessively grand ; rocks piled on each other to tremendous heights, rivers formed into cataracts by their projections, and valleys clothed with woods, present an appearance of enchantment. But *why* do they enchant—*why* is it more affecting than a plain, it cannot be innate, is it acquired ? Thus does knowledge lose all the pleasure which involuntarily arises by attempting to arrest the fleeting phantom as it passes—vain,

almost like the chemist's ether it evaporates under our observation : it flies from all but the slaves of passion and sickly sensibility who will not analyse a feeling.

I will relate you an anecdote, it is a striking one ; the only adventure I have met with here. My window is over the kitchen, in the morning I threw it up, and had hardly finished dressing when "for Charity's dear sake" met my ear. These words were pronounced with such sweetness that on turning round I was surprised to find them uttered by an old beggar, to whom in a moment the servant brought some meat. I ran down and gave him something :—he appeared extremely grateful. I tried to enter into conversation with him—in vain. I followed him a mile asking a thousand questions. At length I quitted him finding by this remarkable observation that perseverance was useless. "I see by your dress that you are a

rich man. They have injured me and mine a million times—you appear to be well intentioned, but I have no security of it while you live in such a house as that, or wear such clothes as those. It would be charity to quit me.”

Now adieu.

Believe me

Yours most sincerely,

PERCY SHELLEY.

[*Addressed outside.*]

Miss Hitchener,

Mr. Pilfold's,

near the Foundling,

London.

[*Re-directed, not in Shelley's hand-writing.*]

Miss Hitchener,

Hurstpierpoint,

near Brighton.

NOTES.

- P. 3. "*The Curse of Kehama*, and Ensor's *National Education*."

Southey's verse is now so little read that not every reader may be aware that the first-named work is by him. Shelley much admired this and other of Southey's poems in his youth; and his appreciation of *Kehama* left many traces on his own work. George Ensor (1769-1841), though now almost forgotten, was a writer of some influence in his own time. It is interesting to learn that he assailed the English government of Ireland in two books, *A Defence of the Irish*, 1825, and *Anti-Union*, 1831; but this was after Shelley's death.

- P. 6. "Am I to expect an enemy or an ally in Locke?"

In this letter Shelley is replying to Miss Hitchener's arguments. She kept drafts of some of her replies to

his letters, and these have been preserved. Here is an extract from her reply to Shelley's first letter :—

"You say your God is Truth : I should say mine is the God of Truth. I am so truly happy to find Locke saying we possess faculties to discover God."

- P. 13. "I have just finished a novel of the day—*The Missionary*, by Mrs. Owenson."

This novel was by Miss (not Mrs.) Owenson. She afterwards became famous as the wife of Sir Charles Morgan, and the author of a good many works of fiction and travel. Shelley elsewhere expresses (if I am not mistaken) a much higher opinion of *The Missionary* than he does here.

- P. 15. "Reason sanctions an aberration from reason."

Shelley is here replying to Miss Hitcheney's comments upon his second letter :—

"You tell me that since you have been a decided votary of reason you have never felt happiness ; and you ask me to comment upon it. Your own arguments furnish me with an answer, viz. : 'that reason sanctions an aberration from reason, when that aberration is productive of higher morality.'—I know we have but one opinion as to the fundamental principle of Virtue :—that it is the business of life to add all in our power to the happiness of others. Must not then

the children of Virtue seek to be happy themselves, lest they give pain to those who in others' happiness find their own? When you tell me the Christian religion militates against virtue, you stagger me. . . . I find so many in the world, and many who have ceased to exist, whose opinions coincide with my own, and who thought themselves Christians, that I still think I must be one. But to-day I met with this sentiment of Lyttleton: 'The man who hates another for not being a Christian is himself not one.' . . . You reason almost too clearly for me on the subject of Deity: but the feeling has taken deep root."

- P. 15. "What I mean by this is an habitual analysis of our own thoughts."

This passage reminds us strongly of Coleridge's—

And haply by abstruse research to steal
From my own nature all the natural man.

- P. 42. LETTER VIII.

The original of this letter bears the seal of the Shelley arms, and a postmark of the 19th of some month very indistinctly marked: it might be either August, or July, or June. It is marked as the ninth letter addressed by Shelley to Miss Hitchener, and if so the month must be August. The concluding paragraph seems to show that when

it was written Shelley was within a short distance of Hurstpierpoint, Miss Hitchener's place of residence. It appears therefore that he was on or before the 19th of August again at Cuckfield or at Field Place.

P. 47. "The ceremony of marriage."

Does Shelley here refer to some ecclesiastical ceremony? The point seems rather doubtful. Prof. Dowden says that the young couple were married "in regular form, and with such ceremony as the Scottish law required." I believe that all that the Scottish law then required was that the contracting parties should declare themselves in the presence of witnesses to be man and wife. This would seem to have been the only ceremony that took place; or why should it have been afterwards thought necessary to go through a second form of marriage?

P. 50. LETTER X.

This letter is in reply to one from Miss Hitchener, dated the 11th of October, from which I extract the following passage:—

"Time was, I had not yielded to the world the society of a friend, more to me than all that world; but the good opinion of that world-given, not sought, had begun to deprive me of that freedom which had ever been my glory When last I saw you I have no doubt but you fully intended

the pursuit you named:¹ but this must have been secondary. Circumstances might compel you to yield this, and hasten your marriage. Here then was no equivocation and, as to marrying, that was due to Mrs Shelley. To say how sincerely I wish you both every happiness does not convey half my feeling for it . . . With the greatest and sincerest pleasure should I accept your invitation, if in my power: but situated as I am, it is not possible,—though at some future period, I anticipate accepting it, and this pleasure in anticipation will beguile many a heavy duty of its pain. I long to be introduced to your Harriet: will she ever permit me to call her so? She shall have a sister's affection, for are you not the brother of my soul? See, I have profited by your instructions, and levelled you with as much, nay perhaps more facility than you can wish."

- P. 54. "But thou art a sister of my soul, *he* is its brother."

No doubt T. J. Hogg is here referred to, though it is rather curious that Shelley should speak thus, without having previously named him.

- P. 57. "The letter at Field Place has been opened"—I suppose this was a letter

¹ This refers to Shelley's expressed intention of studying for the profession of medicine.

of Miss Hitchener's which had been delivered at Field Place after Shelley had left it.

- P. 62. "You are to come to dine here, and bring Emma—"

Emma was, no doubt, a daughter of Captain Pilfold, and one of Miss Hitchener's pupils.

- P. 63. LETTER XII.

In this letter Shelley replies to one from Miss Hitchener, in which she had thus responded to his proposal that he should, when he came into his fortune, share it with her:—

"I . . . hasten to answer that part of your letter in which you wish me to share your fortune. This is an unparalleled instance of generosity You have given me, in sharing the pleasures of your mind, an inexhaustible store of delight, and left me nothing more to wish for. When you come into possession of all your fortune, I will tax your friendship for the mother of my soul, the dear woman who educated me. . . . Me alone, of all her pupils, did she love as her child. . . . I was not then ten. . . . She has kept a school seven-and-thirty years; but, having too much virtue for the age, has ever been an object of persecution. She is still compelled to continue it, and I have long sighed to offer her an asylum. This was my principal motive for engaging in a school; but, till I am

independent of my parents, I durst not. . . . But as I foresee, Miss Adams will not suffer me to do for her what I wish, this gratification (should her life continue, which I tremble frequently for) shall be transferred to you. . . . She is not a stranger to your tract, but exclaimed, 'What ! a Shelley an Atheist !'

There are few of Shelley's letters which are more important than this, since in it he gives the clearest and best account of the circumstances which led up to his marriage with Harriet Westbrook. It is plain enough from it that it was no overmastering passion on Shelley's part which caused it ; but rather pity for the lady's real or imaginary distresses which led him, in the spirit of a knight-errant, to rescue her from her persecutors. But Shelley was very young, and Harriett was younger ; and as the French say, What would you ? At nineteen and sixteen we seldom consider what the future consequences of our actions are likely to be. Had it been an ordinary boy and girl marriage, it might have turned out happily enough ; but Shelley was a genius, and his wife was—not.

P. 70. "I observed that you were much shocked at my mother's depravity."

In what his mother's "depravity" consisted we do not know. In Medwin's *Life of Shelley*, however,

there is a passage which may have some bearing upon this point. Medwin says that Shelley told him that, once when his father was absent upon his parliamentary duties, his mother invited him to Field Place, and while he was there asked him with much show of affection to sign a certain document. This he would have done had he not seen through his mother's pretended tenderness for him. I do not think that too much stress should be laid upon this statement, since we have no means of knowing what the mother may have had to say in answer to this charge.

P. 72. LETTER XII.

This again is a most important letter, since it discloses the treachery of the man whom Shelley had, up to that time, trusted with the most complete confidence and love. That Hogg in his youth differed much from the Hogg who, late in life, wrote that astonishing piece of self-disclosure which he called *The Life of Shelley*, can hardly be doubted; for how else could Shelley, prone as he was to idealise his friends, have failed to discover his utter unworthiness? But it was at best an ill-assorted friendship, and must, sooner or later, have come to a sudden termination. Something perhaps might be urged in Hogg's behalf in the present case. Possibly or probably he did not attempt

deliberately to seduce Harriet ; but only gave way to a sudden impulse of passion. But we must needs deplore the ill-luck of Shelley, which in Hogg's case, as in so many others, led him to put his love and trust in those who were unworthy of it.

P. 91. LETTER XVI.

In this letter Shelley replies to one he had received from Miss Hitchener. I take the following extract from her letter :—

“There needed not this to make me shudder at human nature. It has too often frozen my heart's blood, and prompted me to forswear my kindred with mankind, and, more than any other cause acted, I think, upon my feelings to accept a religion which promised a purer nature Oh ! the ecstatic idea of the society of ‘just men made perfect,’ and a being more holy than the human mind can conceive affords the heart such real bliss that my feeling knows not how to forgo what my reason is not ready to adopt Too well I see he mistook the love of virtue for the practice of it *You* do indeed rise above human nature. To pardon and seek to reclaim him is worthy of my idea of you. In you I fear no disappointment. I see you rise with trial, and I feel something like *gratitude* for the happiness you give me Before I close this, I

hint a suspicion that our friends would willingly lessen us in each other's opinion. I give them credit for good motives, I have the highest respect for them. It is all useless : I judge for myself." J

P. 96. LETTER XVII.

This letter is in reply to one from Miss Hitchener, dated Nov. 15. The following passage is extracted from her letter :—

"Exquisite happiness and acute misery must have their abode in a sense beyond the ordinary five ; and the sense or senses beyond, I think, belong distinctly to the soul ; and, on the side of reason, the only evidence of a soul is this imagination. Let not my fancy, I beseech thee, my dearest friend, run away with my reason. On your reason I rely Oh lovely sympathy ! I owe thee much : and the few months I have drunk of thy re-animating cup atone for the blank of years I had endured. Stoics may call our friendship selfish. I contradict them not : but self, consistently with virtue, must be indulged when it militates not against the happiness of others Little did I imagine when first I saw you (and now I see the spot, I am in the room endeared to me by this remembrance) little did I then foresee the cheering path before me But for the Captain I had never known

you. Thus will new views open on your path: not that they can annihilate remembrances, but the mind dwells on the future rather than the past. Bear up, then, my friend."

- P. 106. "—the sottish idiotism of frenzy-nourished fools, as once I was."

Evidently Shelley is here referring to his unrequited passion for his cousin, Harriet Grove.

- P. 113. "Cannot the sweet little nurslings of liberty come?"

This apparently refers to some American children whom Miss Hitchener was educating.

- P. 123. "He was an elderly man—"

This was probably Mr. Calvert, of Greta Bank, a Cumberland Squire, who was very popular in his day. The Calverts were neighbours of Southey; and one of them, it will be recollected, was Wordsworth's greatest friend and benefactor.

- P. 128. "I am as little inclined as you are to quarrel with Taffy—"

This last word is rather illegible: it might be read as "Jassy" or "Josey"

- P. 130. "We design, after your visit . . . to visit Ireland."

This is the earliest known reference to Shelley's project of visiting Ireland.

- P. 132. "I shall also see Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, there."

It was unfortunate that Shelley

never met either Wordsworth or Coleridge. The latter one can easily conceive him as being pleased with, and deriving a good deal of benefit from; but one feels rather dubious as to the result of a meeting with Wordsworth. Their tempers and aims were so different and so alien that it is hard to imagine them as parting with anything but unfavourable impressions of each other. Yet a prolonged acquaintance might have been of benefit to both; since Wordsworth might have acquired something of Shelley's warmth and enthusiasm, while the younger poet might have profited by the contemplation of Wordsworth's steadfast devotion to his chosen vocation, and his love for nature and human nature in their most unsophisticated manifestations. But Southey, whom Shelley did meet, was of all men the least fitted to influence him for good.

P. 132. "Give my love to Anne."

Apparently a pupil of Miss Hitchener's. For a further reference to her in a different tone, see p. 221.

P. 134. LETTER XXII.

When one remembers with what difficulties Shelley was then struggling, and considers the sacrifices he was prepared to make in order to maintain his principles, it cannot fail to be seen how honourable to him are the contents of this letter. We may

indeed consider his conduct imprudent (but it was always that!) or even quixotic; but adherence to principle, and more especially to such a refinement of principle as we have in this case, at the expense of one's pecuniary interests, is so uncommon that Shelley is entitled to receive every possible credit for it. He is offered an immediate income of £2,000 per annum—which, in his then impecunious state must have seemed a sum beyond the dreams of avarice—on a condition which to most persons would have seemed not merely easy, but altogether acceptable from their own point of view. Yet on a point of honour, which almost any other person would have at once set aside as a mere refinement of scrupulosity, he refuses this almost princely allowance.

What was the object of this apparently generous offer to him, assuming that Captain Pilfold had made no mistake in the matter, and that it was really in contemplation to make it? We have seen already in these letters that Shelley had ideas as to the disposal of the family property, should it ever come into his hands, which must have been extremely distasteful to his father, and to the other persons who were interested in the matter. It was probably with the idea of preventing him from dealing

as he pleased with the property that the offer was to be made to him. This accounts for his indignation at the mention of the terms upon which the allowance was to be made. It was Shelley's opinion that all property should be held in trust for the general benefit, and not merely used for the private advantage of its possessor.

P. 137. "—with some hints as to duelling, to induce me to meet him in that manner."

It is hard to believe that Hogg can possibly have invited Shelley to fight a duel with him. We must needs have a very low opinion of him; but that, after attempting to destroy his friend's happiness, he was willing to run the risk of taking his life, is surely incredible. That he threatened to commit suicide seems clear enough; but it is difficult to believe that he seriously intended to do it. Probably Shelley had mistaken the tenour of some passage in Hogg's letter. The more, however, the matter is considered, the worse does the case look against Hogg, while the poet's conduct shines all the brighter by comparison. What is most strange in the whole affair is the fact that Hogg, believing himself safe from detection, printed in his *Life of Shelley* one of his friend's expostulatory letters to himself, under the pretence that it was a fragment of a novel by Shelley

on the subject of Charlotte and Werter !

Impudence to no farther length could go,
Nor falsehood aping truth more blackly
show.

The reader should see the letter referred to in the recent reprint of Hogg's book, p. 541.

- P. 140. "Wordsworth, a *quondam* associate of Southey——"

I believe there is little or no foundation for this account of Wordsworth's poverty. His means at this time were certainly restricted, but he was never so poor as Shelley represents him to have been.

- P. 142. LETTER XXIII.

This letter is numbered 25 in the original MS. ; Nos. 23 and 24 having been lost. It appears, from a letter to Harriet Shelley which Miss Hitchener addressed to her that the young couple had met with some accident in a recent water-excursion :—

"You have made me laugh at your water-excursion : but it has made me serious too. I cannot spare you, and am tremblingly alive to danger. Pray, then, be not either of you so hazardous again."

It may be inferred from this that Shelley had on this occasion run some risk of being drowned : the first of many instances prior to the final catastrophe.

In another letter, written in reply to one of the lost epistles, Miss Hitchener says :—

“The Captain was with me (come to fetch Emma) when your letters were brought me. He had just informed me of the proposals made to you. I spoke as I felt upon the subject : that feeling you—and I fear you only—can know. The Captain was silent whilst I spoke of them : but the glow of admiration illumined his fine countenance when I spoke of you. Notwithstanding the world strives hard to make him as wise as its children, I think it never can, for he certainly glories in you. He regrets to me that you treat him with a half-confidence. He has a warm and generous heart ; and must then, my dearest friend, be excused this regret. Surely I cannot be deceived in him, yet you know best ; and, I am certain, could give me very satisfactory reasons for withholding communication from him. . . . I am glad these proposals were made to you : they prove you to the world. . . I am delighted in showing to the world that a being such as my imagination had often conceived is not ideal. . . . Thou, my dearest friend, art a living example of my idea of a truly virtuous man.”

Surely this passage shews Miss Hitchener in a very favourable light,

and suggests that, after all, she was not wholly unworthy to be the poet's friend and confidante? One is very glad, too, to read her account of the good Captain Pilfold, who ought henceforth to be ranked among the very few who loved and appreciated Shelley, when almost all his acquaintances were arrayed against him.

- P. 142 "I have also been engaged in talking with Southey."

The opinions which Shelley here attributes to Southey can hardly be accepted as representing quite faithfully the ideas which the latter then entertained.

- P. 147 "This proposal will be (if made)—"

This apparently refers to the before-mentioned proposal to make Shelley an allowance of £2,000 per annum.

- P. 149 "What do you advise me about Hogg and my uncle?"

Miss Hitchener had apparently advised him to communicate to Captain Pilfold the story of Hogg's treachery.

- P. 156. "You talk of Montgomery."

There is very little foundation for this account of James Montgomery.

- P. 157. "'Poet's Epitaph.'"

This poem, as Shelley gives it, differs much from the authentic text. There are many verbal alterations, and Shelley omits nearly one half of the complete poem.

P. 163. LETTER XXV.

Though addressed to Hurstpierpoint, this letter was sent on thence to Miss Hitchener, "at Mrs. Adams', School Hill, Lewes." This gives us the address of Mrs. (or Miss) Adams, whom Miss Hitchener speaks of as the "Mother of her Soul."

P. 165. "How does Sir Thomas Burdett continue to live?"

Sir Francis (not Sir Thomas) Burdett was a distinguished politician of Radical opinions, though later in life he became a Conservative. He was twice imprisoned (in 1810 and 1820) on political charges.

P. 167. "You will see in my *Hubert Cauvin*."

Probably Shelley did not make much progress with this story: no part of it is now in existence.

P. 192. LETTER XXVII.

In this letter, written partly by Harriet, and partly by Shelley, there are a good many points of interest. From Harriet's portion it appears that she had sent a previous letter (which is now lost) to Miss Hitchener, in which she had told the story of an assault with a view to robbery which had been made upon Shelley. This occurred about seven o'clock on the night of Sunday, Jan. 19. Shelley, alarmed by an unusual noise, went at that time to the door of his cottage, opened it, and then received a blow which struck him to the ground.

Mr. Dare, his landlord, rushed to his assistance, and the assailant or assailants, seeing that he was armed, then took to flight. Such is the story, which, however, some of the Keswick folk were disposed to regard as a mere dream or hallucination of Shelley's.

We learn further from Shelley's portion of the letter that his allowance of £200 per annum from his father had been restored. The references to Shelley's grandfather, Sir Bysshe Shelley, are very curious. How strange it is to find Shelley saying of him "He is a complete atheist, and builds all his hopes upon annihilation." Bad as he may have been, however, he seems to have liked his grandson more, and was more willing to forgive his eccentricities, than his own father.

P. 204. "Prospects appear fair; but I have learned to doubt——"

This is, I think, almost the first note of pessimism that we find in Shelley's writings. Hitherto we have had nothing but the note of confidence in himself and in his mission; but here we see the beginning of the lesson which the world teaches to all who would rouse it from its lazy acquiescence in things as they are, out of which the devotion of the hero, the patriot, and the martyr seeks in vain to uplift it. Shelley was destined to learn this lesson fully

before the end came ; but the knowledge neither soured his disposition, nor abated his love for humanity. What he said of his Prometheus he might have said of himself:—

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite ;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or
night ;
To defy Power which seems omnipotent ;
To love and bear ; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it con-
templates :

Neither to change, nor fault, nor
repent ; . . .
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory !

How pathetic, too, and even tragic, is the writer's confidence in his female friend, and in her ability to second his endeavours ! Mistaken as it was, and unhappily as it turned out, it was an error that was possible only to a noble and beautiful spirit.

Nor is it possible to read Harriet's portion of this letter without a sense of pity and compassion for her as well as for the other actors in this unique drama. It is hardly possible to reflect on the whole pitiful story without feeling that that stern and immutable fate which was the chief agent in the Greek tragic drama was here also hurrying its victims forward to their inescapable doom.

P. 213. "I am Irish : I claim kinship with them."

This seems to be affirmed by way of sympathy, not as a literal fact.

P. 217. LETTER XXIX.

It is needless to say that the doubts which Shelley here expresses as to Southey's amiability in his private life were without foundation. Whatever may be thought of him as regards his public conduct, he was certainly all that he should be in his private relations. In the sentence "But we leave the Calverts," we should, I think, add "with regret." It is pleasant indeed to read Shelley's tribute to Mrs. Calvert—one of the noble and fine-natured women who saw as by intuition the beauty and charm of his character.

P. 227. "The ocean rolls between us."

This passage might very easily be arranged and read as blank verse. It resembles a passage which is to be found in the latter half of the third section of "Queen Mab."

P. 236. "I have not seen Flower's book."

This book is referred to again in the letter of Feb. 27, 1812; what it was I do not know. "Mr. Flower" may have been Benjamin Flower, an advanced politician of the time, printer of the *Cambridge Intelligencer*, and father of Eliza Flower, the musical composer, and Sarah Flower Adams, author of "Vivia Perpetua," a remarkable dramatic poem, and other works. It does not appear, however, that this gentleman published anything about this time, except a

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political review, and a tract on the abolition of Tithes.

P. 238. LETTER XXXII.

Shelley wrote this short note on a page of a Dublin newspaper, which was used as a wrapper for the first sheet of his pamphlet as it was sent to Miss Hitchener. Another page of a Dublin newspaper is preserved in the Hitchener series. On one side of this Shelley has drawn two slight pen-and-ink sketches; one of them seems to represent a man (not unlike Shelley in facial type) snatching the dart from the hand of Death.

P. 250. "O'Connor, brother to the rebel Arthur, is here."

Arthur O'Connor, the rebel here alluded to, had a very chequered career. See the "Dictionary of National Biography" for an account of him.

P. 261. "Do you know that I am so sick of this world that I long to be in another."

Hogg tells us that Harriet would frequently talk of committing suicide. His statements are not always to be relied on: but the words quoted above confirm his evidence in the present instance.

P. 263. LETTER XXXVI.

Harriet's portion of this letter is surely calculated to engage the reader's sympathies in her behalf. If it does not display much maturity of under-

standing, that is no matter of wonder, since she was not yet seventeen : but it speaks forcibly as to her goodness of heart. We learn from it at what time Shelley first began to adopt a vegetarian diet.

Harriet's allusion to Miss Hitchener's new name (adopted because Harriet's sister was named Eliza, and it would be inconvenient to have two Eliza's, when Miss Hitchener joined the Shelleys) refers to her assumption of the name of Portia..

P. 270. "My speech was misinterpreted—"

Mr. Mac-Carthy, in his "Early Life of Shelley" gives full details as to this speech, and its effect on the audience. It was on the whole well received ; but an audience of Roman Catholics could not be expected to listen patiently to sentiments, however carefully worded, in which their religious faith was reflected upon.

P. 273. LETTER XXXVII.

More than a month had elapsed between the date of the last letter to Miss Hitchener and of this one. A good deal had happened in the meantime. Shelley's last letter said nothing of his resolve to leave Ireland, and indeed its language (and notably that part of it referring to his design of gaining control of a newspaper) seems to imply that he intended to stay there some time longer. It is evident, however, from

the same epistle that he was beginning to be discouraged at his ill-success in rousing the spirit of the Irish people. He was rapidly learning in the school of experience the same lesson that Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey, had learned not long before; though it did not produce in his case the same effect that it did in theirs. Once satisfied that he could do no good in Ireland, Shelley quickly made up his mind to leave it; and then began once more his restless wanderings, only to end with his life, in search of that ideal dwelling place which he was never to find, though he was always finding it. It is curious that Shelley allowed so long a time to pass without writing to his friend. Perhaps he was a little reluctant to confess to her that his expedition had proved a failure. She evidently, as well as his other friends, had dissuaded him from his project: and even Shelley was not free from that common weakness which makes us all loath to confess that a design, undertaken against the advice of all whom we have consulted, has resulted in complete failure.

The box which Shelley speaks of in this letter contained copies of his Irish pamphlets and of his *Declaration of Rights*. This box was never received by Miss Hitchener. It was opened at Holyhead by the Surveyor

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of Customs, who, deeming the contents to be of a treasonable nature, communicated with the secretary to the Post-Office. A letter from Harriet was also enclosed in this box. See Appendix, p. 311.

The "murderer of Marr's family," whom Shelley refers to in his letter was named Williams. His atrocious crime gave rise to De Quincey's notable essay on "Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts."

P. 284. LETTER XXXIX.

This letter bears a very obscure postmark in which "29" alone is clearly legible. The original numbering of the Hitchener correspondence would make this letter precede that last given; but the phrase "Harriet is still so unwell" implies that some previous letter notifying her illness had been sent by Shelley, and the last meets this requirement. It would appear that the previous letter was written in the morning of the 29th of April, and the present in the evening, after Shelley had received a further letter from Miss Hitchener.

P. 288. "I have written to my uncle and written to your father."

The original holograph of Shelley's letter to Mr. Hitchener is in the British Museum. It opens with a strong expostulation against the false reports which had been circulated as to the relations between himself

and Miss Hitchener. The letter then proceeds as follows :—

“Sir, my moral character is unimpeached and unimpeachable. I hate not calumny so much as I despise it. What the world thinks of my actions ever has, and I trust ever will be, a matter of the completest indifference [? to me]. Your daughter shares this sentiment with me ; and we both are resolved to refer our actions to one tribunal only, that which nature has implanted within us. I am married, my wife loves your daughter : she laughs at whatever the scandal of a few gossips out of employment might whisper, nor is she willing to sacrifice the inestimable society of her friend to the good opinion of the good people of Hurst or Horsham at the tea-party or card-table assembled. So far as myself and Mrs. Shelley are concerned we are irrevocably resolved that no expedient shall be left untried on *our* part to induce our friend to share the prosperity or adversity of her lot with us. Much as the strong affection which she bears you has prejudiced me in your favour, yet I would take my own opinion, particularly when it springs from my reasoning and feelings, before that of any man. And you will forfeit the esteem I have thus acquired for your character if you endeavour by parental

command to change the decisions of a free-born soul."

Whether this letter had any influence in inducing Mr. Hitchener to consent to allow his daughter to take up her residence with the Shelleys; or whether the lady ultimately resolved to take her own course in the matter, there is no evidence to show.

- P. 310. "I have been writing a defence of Eaton."

This was Daniel Isaac Eaton, who was prosecuted in the Court of King's Bench for publishing "a blasphemous and profane libel on the Holy Scriptures, entitled *The Age of Reason*, Part the Third, by Thomas Paine." Tried before a jury, with Lord Ellenborough as Judge, he was as a matter of course condemned. Shelley's defence, it need hardly be said, took the form of *A Letter to Lord Ellenborough*, which was printed, but not published till long afterwards.

